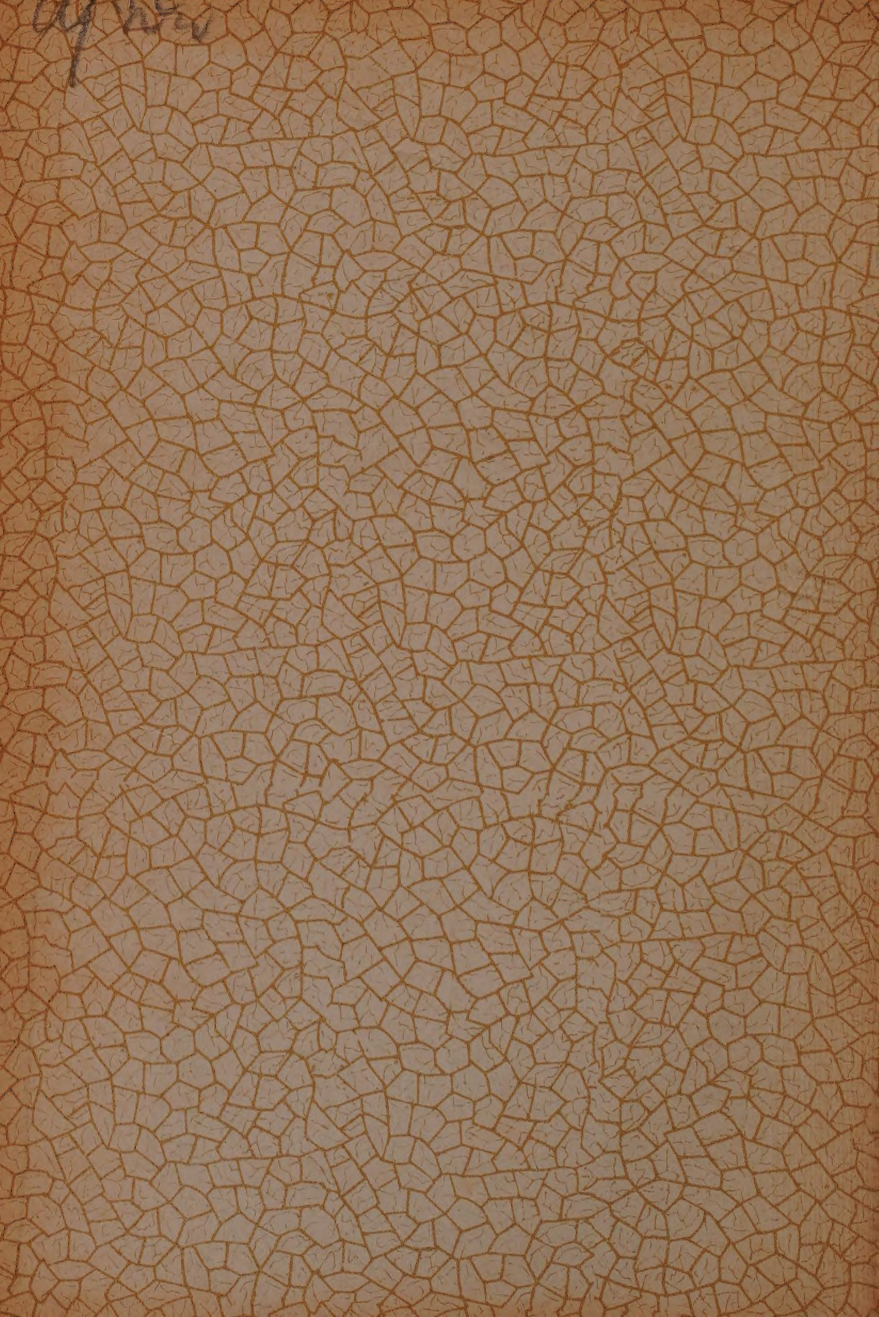




TEN-MINUTE SERMONS

TEN-MINUTE SERMONS

BY THE REV.

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&c

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TO THE PURE AND CHERISHED MEMORY
OF I. D. N.

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TEN-MINUTE SERMONS

EPAPHRAS: "A HEART AT LEISURE FROM ITSELF"

He longed after you all and was full of heaviness, because ye had heard that he had been sick.—PHIL. ii. 26.

Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.—COL. iv. 12.

THE identification of Epaphroditus mentioned in the Epistle to the Philippians with Epaphras the minister to the Colossians is precarious. The names are the same, but there is difficulty in supposing that one person is meant. Still, put together, the descriptions make up a harmonious and singularly beautiful type of Christian character—of "a heart at leisure from itself." In Philippians, Epaphras is represented as sorrowful even to agony, because his friends

had heard of his illness. He had been sick—sick almost to death—but he would fain have had no one burdened by his trouble. In Colossians we have the servant of Christ always striving for the saints in prayer, that they may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God. This was a heart of gold.

Few examples are more timely than that of Epaphras in his unwillingness to have his sickness published abroad. Of all trouble, it is perhaps true that it is best even for ourselves not to speak much of it. This is so true of the greater griefs that an almost certain gauge of the depth to which pain has sunk is the measure of its repression. The more real the pain, the greater is the anxiety the world should ignore it. Only inexperienced sufferers are voluble. Those familiar with the secrets of anguish are silent. They do their best to hide from the outer world the consciousness, the memory, and the expectation of their suffering. They make much of alleviations, and eagerly welcome whatever soothes and distracts. They know that expression reacts upon emotion, and makes the burden heavier. This is even truer about lesser sorrows. The mortifications of wounded vanity make a more

or less appreciable element in the discipline of life, and they are always intensified by being proclaimed. Even while he suffers, one may doubt whether there is any just cause for pain, and the memory of the slight or disappointment fades away if it is not cherished. Once tell it, and it becomes objective, with an independent existence — a living minister of misery.

But in the mind of Epaphras there was a nobler feeling. He knew that the Philippians were hardly bearing up under the weight of their own sorrows. Life was difficult to them as to him, and its troubles were perhaps growing day by day. With the generosity of a great nature, he believed that they loved him well—that his illness would sadden them deeply—and it lay with a double weight on his heart because it had burdened theirs. How many are incapable of understanding this! They are miserable in sickness because all the world does not know of it—the first strength they recover is occupied in composing elaborate descriptions of their ailments. Who has not watched a fretful invalid recounting his woes, blind to the pain in the patient listening face? The care of the world

would be sensibly diminished if each made up his mind that there is sin in needlessly adding to the load of existence, that we have no right to burden the hearts of the tender. Alas, this "importunate canvass for sympathy" often wears affection out, and sufferers die unlamented because they have exhausted the resources of compassion. Nor even should the claim be urged through looks that are silent pleas for pity; as far as possible, Christians must divest themselves even of the air of sorrow. We read in Marie Bashkirtseff's life that when she heard she was attacked by consumption, she exclaimed, "Is it I? O God! I! I!! I!!!" Many will remember Robert Hall's words on recovering from a keen paroxysm of anguish, "But I have not complained, have I, sir? No, and I will not complain."

For we have a hiding-place, a refuge, in One whose patience we can never tire, whose sympathy never fails. Epaphras is found "always striving in prayer." Perhaps our faithlessness is shown in nothing so much as in the current limitations of Scriptural teaching on prayer. We are to go to God with all—"Pour out your hearts before Him, ye people." There we are to begin, and

we shall end with Christ. He offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears, and the issue was peace. God loves so well to hear us that it is almost a treachery to Him that we should go with our trials to any other. He knows that we must have sympathy—lively and complete. But is not His sympathy—the sympathy of God in Christ—sufficient for us? The true guerdon of pain faithfully borne is the assurance that it has put God to trial—that we can now be sure of His grace—that He has given the victory to what in us is higher and diviner—and that, having done this, He will bring us through all that awaits us, and not see us cast away. This is the witness of exercised spirits. They have entered an abiding serenity, for they know that there is that in them which has survived the worst that time can do, and which must conquer at the last.

But as we climb the heights of prayer, our main work is intercession. Epaphras strove without ceasing for his brethren. The power of intercession is not to be measured; it goes out into the endless connections and sympathies of the spiritual world, reversing, influencing, succouring, consoling, in numberless ways.

"The course of prayer who knows?
It springs in silence where it will,
Springs out of sight and flows
A lonely rill.

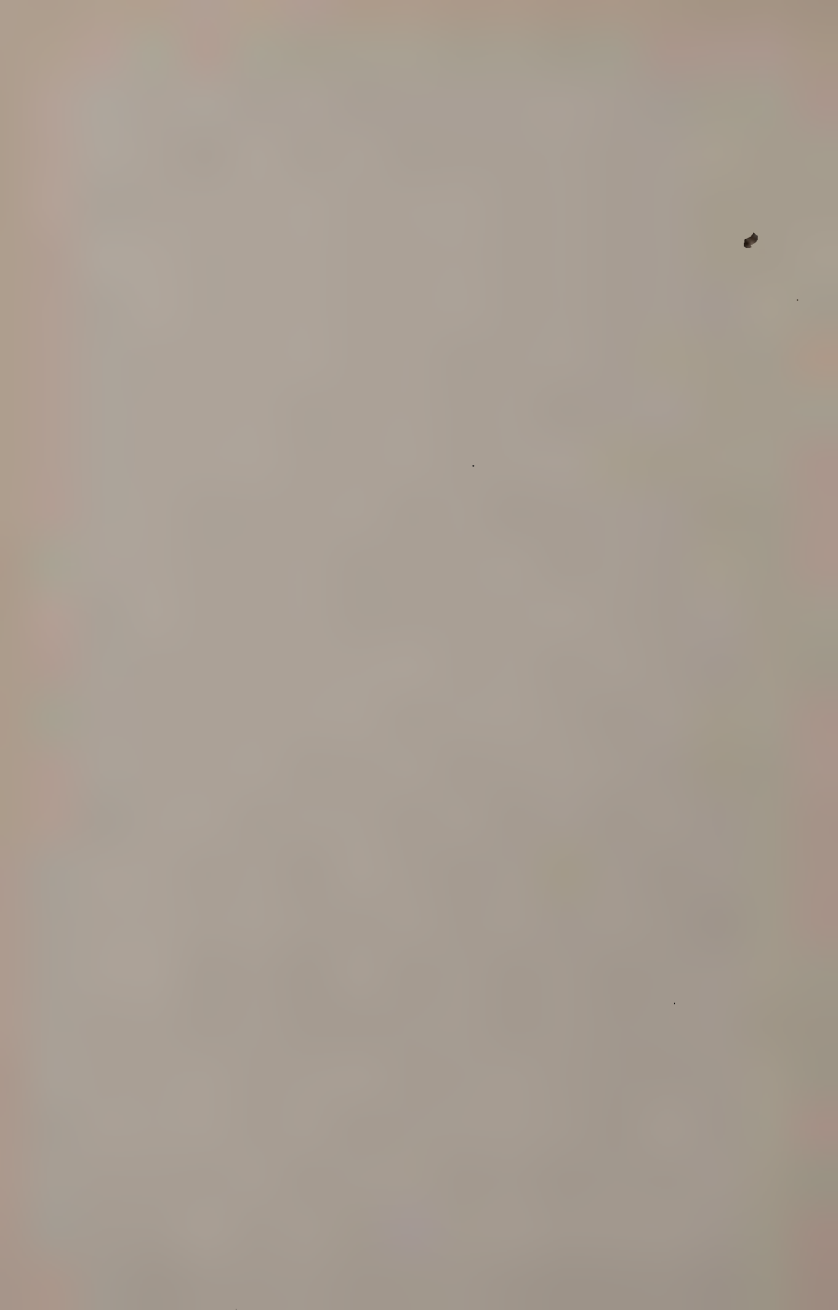
"But streams shall meet it by-and-by
From thousand sympathetic hearts,
Together swelling high
Their chant of many parts."

Love prays, because before love can bless, it must be allied with wisdom and power. It is hard to know what is best. It is so easy for love to injure when it is seeking good, it is so difficult to make its small means of succour available for the need it sees, that true love is always prayerful. And it prays for the highest: "that ye may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God." The aspiration is after not a general but a perfect conformity to the divine. The saints are, as it were, rough-hewn by morality and conscience and the ordinary influences of grace; Epaphras asks that the last touches of the finger of God may mould them to His perfect loveliness.

Epaphras could not have prayed with such tender warmth unless he had sought directly to bless and help his friends. Prayer is a suggesting grace, and it is answered often by guidance to him who offers it. We are not only forbidden

to burden others needlessly; we are to be kind. There are people who make conscientious provision for those who depend on them, by unceasing toil and much sacrifice. That is not enough; the heart must be refreshed. Lacordaire wrote: "Above all other things be kind. Kindness is the one thing through which we can the most resemble God and the most disarm men. Kindness in mutual relations is the principal charm of life." What are we doing to increase the innocent happiness of others, to gladden the weary, to lift the worn spirit from the dust? Every day we should resolve to do something—were it but to speak a word or write a letter—to bring some brightness into another's life.

Thus, seeking not our own, we shall find some better thing than that which we forego. When our Lord's life gathered itself up at His Passion, one pure flame of love burned upon the awful altar. Out of His deep interior recollection He spoke "prayers, admonitions, and answers." He interceded for His crucifiers, provided for His mother, forgave the penitent robber. So, having done all, He commended Himself to Love, and departed out of this world to the Father.



GOD THE OFFERER OF PRAYER

*The Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings
which cannot be uttered.—Rom. viii. 26.*

IT may well be, as Dr. Stanford has suggested, that the disciples once overheard the Son of Man praying to His Father. The pilgrims, when almost at the end of the ground, perceived that “a little before them was a solemn noise as of one that was much concerned. So they went on and looked before them, and behold, they saw, as they thought, a man upon his knees with hands and eyes lift up, and speaking, as they thought, earnestly to one that was above.” So once in the morning the disciples may have gone out to meet their Lord as He returned from a night of pleading, and pushing up through the dewy leaves and round by the boulder, may have come upon Him lifting His soul to God. And they said when He ceased, “Lord, teach us to pray.”

Prayer is at once the easiest and the hardest of spiritual exercises. At the beginning the path is straight and clear. Even then we ask for words, and they are given us. As the soul lifts itself to the Eternal, it craves for the subtle and unsleeping ministry of the Holy Ghost. It seeks an atmosphere in which prayer may utter itself. At last—such is the marvel and mystery of supplication—it seeks that God should speak to God. It is not satisfied any more with being taught to pray. It asks to be the shrine in which prayer is presented, rather than the priest who pleads. More than the presence of the Son of God praying by our side is the presence of the Holy Spirit praying within. “The Spirit maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered.” As Christ stood for us our substitute in death, so the Holy Spirit stands for us our substitute in prayer. The heart is quiet in that hour of deep consent—with the peace of the river that has found the sea, of the bird homed in the nest with tired wings folded. It shares the secret of the divine purpose, and is one in every point with the holy and prevailing Will. The redeemed heart moves forward like the first of all days, from the evening to the morning—from the Old

Covenant to the New—till it touches, in the intercession of the Holy Ghost within the believer, that moment of intense yearning which signs and crowns the last experience of grace.

There is then One stronger than the strong—a power working for holiness and justice which is never discouraged, never stayed, never ultimately defeated. Perhaps this assurance was never more needed than now. The actual, penetrating, tremendous strength of evil was never more visible. Whether it spreads its infection subtly or takes arrogant and insistent shape—we cannot but everywhere see it in results fatal alike to the life of the society and the individual. But the wakeful Spirit is still brooding and ruling. A holy Power is at the roots of life—measuring itself with flesh and blood and the rulers of darkness. God is not a mere spectator: He is present in this clash of spiritual armies, His life is everywhere at work counteracting death. His ministry in the deepest places of the redeemed soul goes ceaselessly forward, and thereby He revives within His people the ever-fading sense of His kingdom and power and glory.

Nor is He with us merely as an energy. It is not enough to say that He adds to the forces that

are fighting against wrong and untruth. The reality goes deeper still. That nearer and indefatigable love of which we are conscious in hours of vehement pleading is sympathy as well as force. A sacred sorrow is spread through the earth and heaven, not hopeless because it is unutterable. We groan, being burdened. The whole creation groans and travails together in pain. And the Spirit maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Grief is divine as well as human. God's yearning—our burden—have a common voice. The higher Love lifts us into the secret of its own pain, and descends into the heart of ours. It opens our ears to the discord of time. The divine communion, it is true, dries many tears, but it causes others to gather, and not till we pass to the new life will God wipe away the last tear that bears witness to the anguish the world. So the intercession of the Spirit in the believer is an intense stimulation of pure desire. It undergirds it and lifts it up to God. The merciful Spirit helps our infirmity. He knows the opposition between the redeemed soul which is already in the age to come and the body in this present age. He knows the disharmony between the child of

God and the child of the dust. He regards with peculiar sympathy our struggle with the unutterable. May we say reverently that it has been His own sorrow? He has had to speak at sundry times and in divers manners the Word of God to man. Now He speaks the word of man to God—gives voice to feelings so high and rare that they can find no utterance in human speech. There is nothing that calls forth a quicker compassion in ourselves than the unavailing effort of a little child to speak its pain. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust. And therefore, because we know not what to pray for as we ought, the Spirit makes intercession with groanings which cannot be uttered.

This sorrow of the Divine Spirit is a sign of the peril as well as of the misery of souls. It is, as Mr. Selby has finely pointed out, a counterpart to the soul-travail and strong crying and tears of Him who bore our nature. The sense of our need which inspired Christ's work appears in the Spirit who succeeded Him in the direct guardianship of the Church. The unutterable

groanings of the Holy Ghost echo the pleadings of the High Priest within the veil.

So salvation is no easy thing—does not come for the individual or for the universe as a matter of course. The obedient death of Jesus is the beginning of a long conflict. It is not a force which, lodged in the heart of the world, will surely and painlessly work out its triumph. The bitter sorrow of earth has to be combated with the bitter sorrow of heaven. Ere the groaning of creation turns to praise, it must be met by the groaning of the Spirit. In truth, the conflict between our Lord and Satan is more equal than we think. The march to the goal is slow, and every step is taken in pain. Nothing is accomplished without fervent, wrestling prayer. This seems the condition, the price of every victory. Nor is it only the fortunes of the cause that concern the leader; He looks out with boundless affection for every soldier. Even those enlisted in His ranks, fighting the good fight of faith, are in imminent and constant peril. They need divine help and advocacy to save them from misery too dark to conceive. The Spirit “represents within us a vehement beseechingness no language coined on earth can suggest. The

wildest earthly lamentation cannot hint the grief of God's Spirit over sin, nor its most strenuous entreaties His pitiful deprecation of the doom of those who live and die without God. Between the self-pity of the most forlorn and pain-maddened human sufferer and the illimitable compassion of the Divine Fatherhood there is a margin of emotion which cannot be phrased, and the Spirit expresses that; expresses it with all the force of His infinite and eternal tenderness."

The unutterable groanings of the Holy Ghost mean that the heart craves for the unutterable. Our desires go forward above every earthly good. Struggle, pain, weariness, darkness—we pass through them knowing they are but for a little time. We are helped in our infirmity by the clasping, supporting hand of the Spirit. But immunity from sorrow will not suffice us. Our Divine Friend has prayed for us the unutterable prayer and stirred within us the unspeakable desire, and the finite seeks the Infinite. The meaning of our true end comes breaking through the years. The believing heart even now plunges into the depths of the Divine, where the reason cannot follow. As God is the Offerer of Prayer, so must God be the Answer to Prayer.

ATRA CURA

All your care.—I PETER v. 7.

A TRA Cura—Black Care—was familiar to the light-hearted Roman poet. It was impossible to ride away from it ; wherever the traveller went, it went with him.

"Horses ! landlord, and six good pair
To bear the old Lord back to town,
Far from the broad lands gay with clover,
Far from the rolling grassy down.

Flog the horses, post-boys, faster ;
Let us fly like a ship before the wind,
In the heart of these dull old country mansions
The old Hag Care we have left behind.

* * * *

'Tis all in vain,
For close beside our sleeping master
There sits the old black Hag again."

After all these years of Christ the hard tyranny of circumstance is unloosened. Perhaps it never pressed so heavily as of late. Every morning

there rises the great army of the careworn to take up the daily toils with sinking heart. Every day competition grows more savage, and success more difficult. Every day the sensibilities and aspirations of youth are being killed by the pressure of low necessities. What is music to the man waiting for the footfall of his creditor? What is poetry or philosophy to one intent on the fateful telegram which brings word that his venture has failed? "We can live without poetry and religion and philosophy," such is the cry, "but not without food or clothing or shelter, and these are at hazard." Many of the best hearts in the world are broken by such thoughts, and even those in which life remains are well likened to houses in whose eaves the birds of care have built their nests, and where little can be heard but their importunate croakings.

Atra Cura—Black Care—we find it everywhere—even in the gatherings of Christians. How is it going, they ask too anxiously, with the cause of truth and righteousness? There are hours when all but the bravest are overborne for the moment by the fierceness of the conflict—almost afraid to believe that the eternal summer draws nearer, and that the kingdom of God must come.

When the grey clouds drift over the sky and the winds beat loudly and fiercely, there is no peace save for the soul that has learned to rise above the region of storms.

The argument against care, so frequently urged by our Lord and His apostles, is always an argument for faith. When Christ began His ministry, He pointed upward from the love that watched over the falling sparrow. If God was with the tiny dying bird, how much surer was His keeping of the children. And when at the last, under the shadow of the cross, Jesus sat reasoning with His disciples, He was still pleading for faith. *Let not your heart be troubled . . . believe.* He told them in slow, tender words that they were not to be afraid, for He was always to be with them. St. Paul argued downward from redemption to providence: God who spared not His own Son would not grudge bread. This then is the cure for care: a belief in the constant dumb tending of the Invisible.

The whole current of modern thought runs against this faith. It insists on the insignificance of man. It emphasises the question which Pascal shuddered at. What are we, shut in and lost amidst these frightful wastes of space, encom-

passed by flaming and unknown worlds? As Mark Rutherford has said, "Our temptation is to doubt whether it is of the smallest consequence whether we are or are not, and whether our being here is not an accident." The one answer is that for us Christ died. When we turn to the New Testament, we find the unseen ranks of good and evil contending for our souls, and every victory and every defeat an incident in the war of wars. The battle with flesh and blood, which often seems so sore, is hardly worth naming in presence of the graver struggle. Our fight is with principalities and powers, with the spiritual hosts of wickedness. Angels have charge concerning us. They whisper with saving voices when we are on the edge of peril. They bring back the words of Jesus in hours of despondency and gloom. They watch and rejoice over every movement of purity and tenderness. We belong, in a word, to God and Christ and the angels, and though here accounted nothing, it is otherwise in worlds where the measures are true.

This promise of unsleeping love does not mean that we are to escape the discipline of life. Rather, it signifies that we are to undergo it. Only the pain and darkness that may sometimes

wrap us harshly round are not suffered to invade the central peace of the spirit. Such as they are, we are to have help in bearing them. Our Lord has never promised that we shall keep what money we have or that we shall gain more. He may see us to be too deeply involved in the complexities of living. In His wise love He may take us out of circumstances which make a true and spiritual life impossible, and set us in the great currents of humanity again. Perhaps Jesus never meant that life should grow all of one pattern and stuff. But if men come to think otherwise, true believers will have no temptation to resist them. Whether it be possible or not that a man should be rich and yet a Christian, it is certain that no Christian should be dependent for his happiness on what may belong to him. If from a far outreach of possession and responsibility he finds himself brought into meagre and cramped surroundings, he must cheerfully set himself to discover what poverty can teach him—its peculiar relations towards God and man—its solaces and opportunities. He must seek to learn better what life means, and labour. Of worldly reverses, as of all clouds, we may say that it is down their dim and misty slopes that the angels of purity

and peace often draw near. We are to take our place in the world's business, and to do our best in the work appointed, and to accept outward success when it comes. But all of it must be filled with the heavenly spirit, and bent to the true end. Nothing material is to have supremacy over us. There is a deep sense in which Christians still must live outside their worldly possessions, and confess themselves to be strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

Sometimes we are greatly helped to peace by discovering how short is the time for burden bearing. This flower of rarest comfort is gathered in the valley of the shadow of death. It was one thought of Jesus in His last sermon. There are golden hours spent under the light of the world to come, brooded over by the hope of the resurrection from the dead. The most importunate of worldly cares shrinks into nothing by a grave-side. How little the day's trouble would seem if we only knew how near was the end of all trouble! Sometimes we even see all the days till the coming of the Son of Man as but a hand's breadth. As in Jean Paul's dream, we hear the spring of the great clock that measures the years rushing rapidly down; and see the hands that measure

the weeks and months careering round its face ; and so understand what our Lord meant when He said "a little while."

Only it is not the will of Christ that we should depend merely on the hope of the future. It is not His will that any part of life should be a blank space—an uncomforted stretch of desert through which we march to the Promised Land. The remedy for care is to realise the love of God in Christ moment by moment, touching all existence, and glorifying it—if we will—with peace and joy. That can only be if we abide in Him by that continual exercise of prayer which to Christians must more and more appear the supremely reasonable thing in the business of existence. *Ask, and ye shall receive ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.* Wherefore, said one, lift up your heads, time-born !

THE TRIUMPH OF CONTINUANCE

We faint not.—2 COR. iv. 1.

“WE all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as from a Lord who is Spirit.” St. Paul follows these sublime words with a reference to his own life labour. “Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not.” “We faint not.” We expect, perhaps, a clearer, prouder, more triumphant note. The word, for its place, seems tame and quiet. The Apostle is not stricken in spirit, but neither does he seem flushed with hope. When, however, we look closely at the expression, it yields us the truth that in the service of the Gospel continuance is triumph. The Christian has some humble task allotted to him—to teach in a Sunday school, to preach in a village church. The

years pass; old associates depart, make their fortunes, return. They find their friend where he was—older, feebler perhaps, graver certainly, obscure and unmarked as before, but still at his post. They compassionately contrast his lot with more dazzling destinies, and he, too, may be inclined to self-pity. But to St. Paul the prophetic promise, "They shall walk and not faint," was the climax of Covenant grace. "Having obtained help of God, I continue unto this day," was to him the crown of mercies.

This was because he understood how easy it was to faint; how hard it was to keep up and go on. He had been deeply instructed, as Bunyan says, by God's spirit, word and rod. As we see from the context, his eye was fixed on two great sources of spiritual failure. First, the Apostle knew the immense strength and sleepless malignity of the powers of evil. These to him, as to his Master, were spiritual, and gathered in array under a personal head. As our Lord in His last words to the disciples reckoned the force of the enmity that was at work against them, so here the Apostle encounters and explains the darkness of the unbelieving world. The Gospel had failed because the perishing were blinded by Satan.

"We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." This did not crush or dishearten the Apostle, but it made life to him great and grave. He took to himself the whole armour of God. Nothing less was sufficient. He was in combat with a power subtle, mighty, wholly malignant. True, he foresaw the victory of Christ.

Portentosa, maledicta,
Suo dente serpens icta,
Jacet mundi victrix victa,
Jacet mortem passa mors.

The thing was true, but the time appointed was long. For us the conditions are unaltered. Changes are superficial; all that is deepest remains unchanged. The elements of a soul's tragedy are still the same. What we have to remember is that we are dealing with a foe not affected by the progress of civilisation or the march of reason, not to be conciliated or disarmed. We are fighting the ancient enemies of God and man. This is not to daunt us from the wise and reasonable undertaking of hard things. It must not deepen our despondency over the work God

wills us to do. It should prepare us rather to find difficulties always, and especially in the hour when triumph is at hand. How hard it is to destroy the great embodiments of evil. For years the temperance movement has been an active force in our land. What has it done in closing public-houses, in diminishing the sale of drink? Some of our most religious minds have been profoundly stirred by the evil of impurity. What has been done to lessen it? The combatants are perpetually amazed by the vigour and resource of assailed iniquities. Even when they perish, the unkilld souls of the dead institutions, as some one has said, seem to emerge from them again to take destructive and terrible form. The most impressive part of present-day literature is an apocalypse of human evil — after Christ has been so long time with us. It would have been impossible either to surprise or dismay St. Paul by any such disclosures. He knew. But in the face of it all, after years of deadly engagement, he was able to say, "We faint not." Was it a little thing?

Next the Apostle reminds us that he had to meet his inveterate foes with an outward strength that was continually failing. In the ordinance

of nature the physical force surely diminishes, whilst the calls on energy and courage grow more urgent. For St. Paul there was no respite. His place was ever in the front of battle. Yet his outward man was perishing. He was pressed on every side, perplexed, pursued, smitten down, always bearing about in the body the putting to death of Jesus. He had to bear, for one thing, the falling away of others—that true mystery and tragedy of life which the prophet bewailed. “The youths faint and are weary, and the choice young men utterly fall.” When we look back, we see how many who promised to do great things at the start are prematurely exhausted and burned out. “We have seen some young spirit, endowed with the greatest gifts, rise like a star upon the horizon and move among other lights in the sky, easily to be detected from all others, with a light like none else, a colour of luminousness peculiar to itself, which the world had seldom seen and longed to retain; but just when the eyes of many worshippers were turned to it, it was seen to become troubled, or to shoot away into the darkness.” Even among those who remain there are often signs of faintness, weariness, faithlessness—the love of

ease, the cooling down of enthusiasm. They are like Wordsworth after the French Revolution.

"I lost

All feeling of conviction, and, in fine,
Sick, wearied out with contrarieties,
Yielded up moral questions in despair.
This was the crisis of that strong disease,
This the soul's last and lowest ebb ; I drooped,
Deeming our blessed reason of least use
Where wanted most."

The passing of youth takes something from us all—something of charm, ardour, venturesomeness, power over the minds of our fellows. The inroads of physical weakness take more. When we bid farewell to days of long, unwearied labour, to nights of sweet, unbroken sleep, something has gone from us never truly prized till it was lost. But the Apostle tells us that the inward man may be renewed from day to day. Whoever and whatever left him, he had staying power for his long struggle, and abode at the end of it in strength and hope. The bright visions did not forsake him ; he did not falter in his great task ; he was never sullen, never despondent, never rebellious ; in his darkest hours he was helped by that Spirit who is the restorer of energy and the quickener of hope.

Thus when St. Paul said, "We faint not," he claimed, and claimed truly, that he had mastered circumstances. He had not seen things go as he fain would. He had not been cheered by an experience of unbroken outward success. But he had not failed. Even when he had not succeeded, his soul had gathered strength and calm from the very arrest of progress. The energy of the spirit had not been foiled. Suffering had proved an annealing force by which he not only endured, but comprehended and believed while enduring. Every condition had in it the divine spring of energy which left him unfainting—that is, neither apathetic nor supine. He had yielded to no dwindling tendencies; there had been no shrinking or contracting of the heart. "We faint not." Again, was it a little thing?

Surely it might fitly be the Apostle's chief boast. It was more than the flashing nobility of his great deeds. That this grand and passionate nature should be turned into a loving, working, quiet power; that through the years he did not yield to dismay or bitterness; was not tempted by base compliances; was not elated by passing victories; that having done all he stood—such

was the triumph of St. Paul. It is the triumph of all saints. We glory most not in their brilliant and victorious hours, but in their steadfast perseverance through light and shadow to the end. Remembering that, we bless God "for their faith, their hope, their labour, their truth, their blood, their zeal, their diligence, their tears, their purity, their beauty."

WHAT IT IS TO FAINT

We faint not.—2 COR. iv. 1.

WE have noted the solemn rapture with which St. Paul quietly avowed his own steadfastness, "We faint not." It seemed at first a small thing to say; yet there was in it an assurance of the spiritual peace vouchsafed at last to those who lean upon nothing that can fail. St. Paul had not passed through the zone of passion and joy into wintry and desponding years. To the end he was Christ's witness, seeing below the surface of things, and finding his Master's promises truer and greater than his thought.

Let us consider—for the subject has immediate bearings on life—what St. Paul meant by fainting. He certainly was not thinking merely about heaviness of heart in the Lord's service, or about the abandonment by Christians of their posts.

He defines the errors he had himself escaped: "We have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the Word of God deceitfully; but by the manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake."

It will be seen that the Apostle first of all abjures craft in delivering his message. He condemns it as a shameful thing. We are not stretching his words if we take them as disowning certain expedients designed to draw crowds. Sensationalism is a term which may easily be misunderstood. There are many kinds of preaching that would never be called sensational, which are as certainly not Pauline. The Church has much to learn in removing the hindrances that keep men from the sanctuary. There are many reforms to be carried out in the details of worship. Preaching should be simpler, franker, more attractive. Attention should not be too much tasked. Music has a great and legitimate function. In short, changes are coming which should be welcomed. But there is a point—and it is not difficult to recognise it—when the service ceases

to be worship. It is not any longer impressed with a touch of eternity. Where true reverence is absent, Christ is absent also. Then it matters not how many thousands are present. Every one feels instinctively that the preacher has fainted. He has relied on the undivine. No splendour of outward success can make up for the spiritual failure. Better to be with two or three gathered with Christ than with the multitude which He has sorrowfully quitted. "By manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God" is the limit of the preacher's opportunities. When he displays himself, or relies on the attraction of his musical service, or makes the gathering of a crowd the first aim of his ministry, he has fainted.

Again, to maim or pervert the divine Word is to faint. St. Paul preached Christ and His work of ransom to a world lying in selfishness and corruption. His eyes were steadily fixed on the abyss of moral misery from which the Spirit of God can raise us. Thus he addressed himself primarily to the conscience. By declaring Christ in His vicarious offering and confession for His people, he sought to arouse the sense of sin and need. For the message of Christ crucified and

ascended has in it indeed the unutterable deeps of wisdom. Yet it is not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world that come to nought. It is the wisdom that survives and unmakes them all. If any shrink from the central theme of the Cross, if any seek to judge and mar the Gospel by the passing intellectual fashion, they have fainted.

It is not easy to say how far the message of Christ, and the preaching of His precious death, have given place to other themes. It is certain that the modern criticism of Scripture has been turned to a use directly contrary to its designed end. Instead of drawing from the Bible by a patient study the whole message of God's love, the full history of His redeeming purpose, the sum of the normal views of divine truth expounded by the inspired writers, men have forgotten the treasure in their study of the vessels that contain it. This is to "handle the Word of God deceitfully," to "faint." Whenever preachers cease to give the earnest service of the intellect to Revelation—when they resort to lazy spiritualising, to anecdotage, to clever devices for tickling jaded ears, they have "fainted." Christ and the Word that declares Him are the "wisdom" of

God. Yet it is by spiritual pathways only that we can approach and possess the vast realm of spiritual knowledge. When our fathers said that God had more light and truth to break from His holy Word, they did not mean that what had broken from it hitherto was darkness and falsehood. They meant that they had only begun to understand the mystery of revelation. As Mr. Selby has put it well in his great book on the Holy Spirit, we have as yet but a precarious foothold on an unexplored continent of knowledge. We have in the Bible "a new world, a galaxy of worlds, the faint tremors of whose influence" are only beginning to touch us. We need no new revelation; what we need is stimulated and spiritualised senses to understand the old. So excellent is saving knowledge that those who have but touched the fringe of truth have wrought the works of God. But to those who search Christ as the Wisdom, He will be revealed also as the Power of God.

It is obvious to say that even in the case of the Apostle the fact of failure had repeatedly to be faced. Yes; he admits it. The Gospel was hid. Men perished with its light shining in their faces. The god of this world had blinded their eyes.

Was this to discourage St. Paul? No; if it had, he would have fainted. In other words, to seek too urgently for immediate visible outward success is to faint.

What the Apostle knew was that the forces of evil, however mighty, are not infinite. Against every passion, however terrible, is ranged the grace of the Lord the Spirit. What though the life-giving streams of energy that flowed from him were lost in the sand? Appearances are not final. The river might have gone underground to reappear again. It might have met an obstacle which it could only reduce. Anyhow, the star of duty shone clear, the White Throne was visible through the mists, and he awaited the last judgment. In the Quaker phrase, he "retired to the Lord" from the surface to the depths of life. Often when men taunt us with the charge that our lives have been failures, that our efforts have come to nothing, we may feel that we have not much to say. Indeed, it often seems as if it were so. We have hardly gathered one rose from the wilderness—one token of the coming joy and bloom. But after all the true evidence of success is inward, not outward. It is written on the deepest part of the soul by the finger of

God. It is like the seal of the Spirit set on these dim, infirm, half-blinded natures—the pledge that they shall be conformed at last to the image of the Son.

Once more, to make Christian service a means of advancing personal ambition is to faint. “We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake.” In a subsequent passage of transcendent spiritual power, the Apostle appeals to the witness of his sufferings. Through long years of patience he had borne the worst that time could wreak upon him. He had met it without flinching. At the beginning the Lord had shown him how great things he must suffer for His name’s sake. Thenceforward, gently yet inexorably, he had been led into depth within depth of pain, until the fiery baptism had done its work. He could point to the past as a proof that he had not sought his own. Though he was willing to live, it was not because he loved life for life’s poor sake. He lived only to serve Christ. The very thought of death lifted the labouring spirit as a wave from the heart of ocean.

The lust for flattery, for popularity, for wealth, every one can see, is a sign of fainting. It is

perhaps less easy to recognise in the aversion from pain and conflict a sign almost as awful. When men shrink from unpopularity, from loss, from the advocacy of hard and difficult causes, from being in despised minorities, from the honourable marks of the Lord Jesus, they have fainted. We need, as George Fox says, "a deeply baptised ministry."

"Give me grace to fight like a soldier of Thine, without wrath and without fear. Give me to do my duty, but give the victory when Thou pleasest. Let me live if so Thou wilt; let me die if so Thou wilt—only let me die in honour with Thee. Let Thy truth be victorious, if not now, yet when it shall please Thee; and oh! I pray, let no deed of mine delay its coming. Let my work fail if it be unto evil, but save my soul in truth."

THE PEACE OF DEFEAT

We ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done.—ACTS xxi. 14.

THERE are compensations often for the vanquished ; between the triumph of victory and the peace of defeat there may be little to choose. When a lawsuit that has been dragged over years comes to its close, there is an end, even for the defeated, of the protracted misery, the weary and racking suspense of delay. Though the worst has come to the worst—though the days of existence must be henceforth colourless when they are not harsh and sad—it is something that the strain upon fortitude has been relaxed for the moment. When some long-dreaded evil smites us into the dust, we may be amazed by our own calmness. Certainty, of whatever kind, relieves those worn with the effort of being deaf to the footsteps of fate. The truth—terrible as it is—falls on the dim,

dull, puzzled brain with some strange sense of rest.

But there is a Christian peace in defeat, higher than the mere relief of overtaxed nature. *We ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done.* There is a moment when effort should cease, because the issue is clear. That moment should carry us straight into the silence and rest of God.

There comes an hour to men—perhaps it comes to the most successful—when they accept the truth about themselves. They have hoped and striven for long to achieve something in life. Their hearts have been set on some shining mark. It may be that the whole endeavour and drift of many years have been to attain a certain definite position. In any case they have never thought to rest where they are. What has been is a preparation for what is to be—tolerable as such, but not otherwise. Gradually, with a slow distinctness, a dull pain, it has become evident that the issue is more doubtful than it seemed. Then come fervent efforts, silent conflicts of the spirit. And at last the end is plain. Even those who have hitherto protested with a fond vehemence of defence are silent. Ours, we find, are not the talents of the few, but of the many. Youth has

gone, and taken away with it much that we dearly prized. It is the common lot. In every profession there are comparatively few whose early dreams come to fulfilment. The vast majority have to content themselves with humble aims, slow advancement, an uninteresting career, and a nameless memory. We can bear but little success, and little is given to us, and the day comes but too early when we know that the ascent of life has ceased, and that henceforth we must decrease.

Such defeat, if trustfully accepted, brings its own peace. There is an end of the long, lonely misgivings, of the ambition which has drawn such hard breath under the weight of self-distrust. If we will but cease! Few things are more tragical and forlorn than attempts made to recall the irrevocable—to pretend to a youth that is past—to make vain appeals against an irreversible judgment. It is well to struggle on while hope remains. But let us be wise as we grow older, and accept the award. In some smaller field that once we should have despised, it may yet be possible for us to do something that will endure. If we can see besides the loving will of God in the appointment, the heart will be kept in the

patience of hope. There is a certain stage of life in which men naturally generous and warm-hearted are tempted to a little patient envy. It is when they hear the footsteps of the young hard behind them, and realise that those who come after are preferred before them. Accept the will of God, and all the bitterness goes.

The same thing is true even when ambition is more unselfish. The energies have been flung without restraint into the battle for a great cause. To overthrow some wrong, to win some victory for goodness, is the whole purpose of life. And we are to see no victory: may even have to acknowledge—after all efforts at reconciliation or palliation of the facts—that righteousness is for the moment repulsed. Peace will come to us if we recognise that it is for us to fight: and for others to triumph. To acknowledge this is to carry on a soul's work, to recognise God's presence in life.

"Though we fail indeed,
You I a score of such weak workers, He
Fails never. If He cannot work by us,
He will work over us."

In the winning and losing of love, which is so much of life's business—which is in a great sense

life and death—the will must be disciplined into peace. Men and women have laid bare many secrets of the heart, but though the world is old, none have said much about the defeated desire for love. More has been told about the agony of love withdrawn. Sometimes there is no warning, and the pain has all to be borne without any schooling to content. But oftener we know what threatens. We may try to stifle the hideous fear that looms out from the dark places of the heart, till it grows impossible. When that effort ceases, trust may for the moment drop down dead and powerless. Even the peace of defeat will be withheld. But if we face the truth and accept it with steady, tender, patient submission, some better thing will come.

Surely when Christian faith is more powerful in the world we shall alter our attitude towards the inevitable. Going forth to meet it, we shall be conquerors, not conquered. Why keep out of life the rich and deep memories it might hold if we did not fear to speak what is in the heart? A day dawns when human skill owns itself foiled; when the journey before the loved one is of few and measured steps. Then faith may grow into resignation, which a Roman Catholic writer

has justly called the last term of Christian activity. It is in a true resignation that the Christian displays all his resources, brings all his powers into play. And Christian resignation there cannot be till we understand and believe that resignation is applicable only to things that pass away. We resign nothing that endures. We may have to part with it for more or fewer years; but it waits us in the world of eternal and complete restitution.

When after a hard and prolonged struggle for health it became plain that the end was nigh, many have felt the "solemn quietness" with which Caroline Fox tells us she received what she took for a signal of death. She finished a letter, and "then lay down alone, and felt altogether rather idle and much disposed to be thankful, or at any rate entirely submissive, whatever might be the result." In the memoir of his wife written by Professor Austin Phelps, an experience is recorded which is far more common than might be imagined. Mrs. Phelps' last years were the brightest of her life—marked by a quick blossoming of powers which had long been hidden in the bud. In the noontide of her strength and happiness she was struck by fatal illness. She met it

by what her husband calls a "calm, deliberate, conscientious, determined struggle for life." Feeling that she had everything to live for—that life had rich gifts of love and opportunity, she resolved to do her utmost to abide. She concentrated the whole strength of her being on that battle—watching in silence the signs of failing strength, and expressing continually her strong hope of recovery. Sometimes for days together the conflict was so stern that those she loved best could hardly catch from her a word or smile or look that betokened her interest in them. At length her hope began to waver, and she became convinced that God was calling her to Himself. Then in perfect peace she gave up all, and life drew to its close with a beautiful naturalness, full of thought for those she was leaving, full of love for the Saviour who waited her coming. She had found even in the world of distress the large, unfluctuating peace which comes to those who

"Grow willing, having tried all other ways,
To try just God's."

"O Will of Him we love, which is always known, though not always understood; Will whose justice we may confide in, whose mysteries

we adore ; Will which to gain heaven we would not intercept ; adorable Will, law of all beings, beatitude of the elect ; Will which constitutes the glory of the place it assigns and the power of the sacrifice it commands—Will of my God, involve mine own. Will of my God, be mine ; and continue till my latest breath to initiate me into the secret of Thy growing delights ! ”

THE PROPHET MAY

*When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know
that summer is nigh.—MATT. xxiv. 32.*

TRANSPOSING the words of an American preacher, we may say that what Isaiah is among the books of the Bible, that May is among the months of the year. When we come out on it from a cruel and lingering winter to behold the glory of the forest and the grace of flowers—to mark the delicate beauty of

Primroses and daisies bright,
And everything that loves the light—

hope touches our hearts once more. If a hand lies fast in ours that threatened to slip, if we still find ourselves together on the narrow road that leads by the great precipice, it is with a graver and deeper joy that we turn over the divine pages of the Book of the Prophet May.

May is very fitly the season in which Christian

workers meet to review their labours. Some of them come to tell of reaping as well as sowing. They are happy because they have seen the promise of the kingdom, because they have felt the flush and warmth of the approaching summer. For those to whom they carried the message the accepted day has risen. The Divine Spirit, almost before their very eyes, has renewed the souls of men. Their hearts are open to the teaching of the companies of prophets on the hillsides and in the fields. But others receive it unready. They have sown in a gusty day. The clouds have been low in the sky. Nothing is apparent, nothing can be put into speech or print which does not speak of going back. It seems to them as if all were to end in misery, vanity, and enfeeblement. God rebukes them by His May. There are long winters in grace, but the renewal never fails. The Lord of the harvest waters every seed, and will reckon at last with all who have laboured in every field. Meantime whatever is to be seen anywhere of spring is prophetic—that and nothing else. It all tells of the blessed time when the chief concern shall be uppermost in men's thoughts and words: "It shall yet come to pass that there shall come

people and the inhabitants of many cities; and the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord and to seek the Lord of Hosts; I will go also. Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord."

For the rest St. Paul urges them to be steadfast, to be always abounding in the work of the Lord, by turning their thoughts to the field of death. That above all others is in the charge of Christ. Yet of visible proof that it is so there is next to none. No missionary, however despondent, sees such irresponsiveness. But when the Hope of all the harvest fell into the ground and died, He knew what would come of it. He rose again, and thereby "made the dying deathless." St. Paul argues it out very calmly. What sense sees is to faith the seed changing. It is a redeemed thing as much as the soul that waits it in the cloister of the Church expectant. Though all the forces of nature seem united to transmute and crush it, the final force is spiritual and eternal, and one day the trumpet shall sound. When, the Apostle could not tell, neither can we. In the stir of any morning, in the peace of any evening, we may hear it. But he knew, and we

know, that it will mean the fulfilment of all sacred hope and prophecy. "Shall it not be the full joyous melody of grace made audible everywhere at last, and not one discord left? that archangel's voice, the harmony of all sweet voices of peace and goodwill on earth? The trump of God! ringing out upon the universe the great joy of the long-expectant Christ, swelling and echoing to all worlds the peal of life's full triumph over death! The trump of God, filled with the harmonies of the eternal love, of notes so pure and soft that the last sick earth-child saved by grace shall awaken with a smile to hear heaven's music in it; and resounding also beyond the stars as the voice of many waters, as the sound of a great host, proclaiming that the kingdoms of the world are become the kingdoms of the Lord and His Christ, and heaven shall be for ever where once were time and death, and God who is light shall be all in all."

Therefore, looking at the iron rigour that holds and has held so long the field which the Lord has blessed; be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, and trusting in His prophecy.

What is true on the great scale is equally true

for the individual. Life in Christ is not history—it is prophecy. If it were history it would be nothing, for what could the dim, vexed beginning of eternity count for when time was no more? But eternity is nothing but the unfolding and explaining of time. All that is not of Christ will pass; we go loosed from it as from our sins in the blood of the Lamb. But how much remains! The companionship that made life a holy and happy thing was cut short just at the opening. The plans with which the eager heart teemed all came to nothing. What forces of thought and love we have seemed to spend in vain! Are there wounds that cannot be healed, losses that cannot be made good, griefs that cannot be forgotten? The answer is in the prophecy of May—of everlasting spring and unwithering flowers.

Here the winter comes back after the spring, and we tremble lest we be too happy. The envious heavens, we think, will be tempted to strike down upon our bliss, and over the whole world lies the shadow of turning. But God meant us to be happy, perfectly blessed to all eternity. The ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion, with songs and everlasting joy on their

heads. Joy and gladness—that have flown so high above, so far in front—we shall come up with them at last and hold them in our hands, “their wings covered with silver and their feathers with yellow gold,” and sorrow and sighing shall flee away—the night birds down the night.

CHRIST WITH THE WILD BEASTS

And He was with the wild beasts.—MARK i. 13.

THIS was the sudden perception of a soul in stress of conflict. Relaxing one moment from its tense agony, it saw gathered round the wild beasts of the desert. It remembered them in its after-thoughts on the deadly struggle with more terrible foes.

I. Can we recall experiences like this in our own life battle? At night, in a great suspense, when the soul is sick, blind, helpless, and the forces of being are warring with one another, there has come a momentary change of mood. The carving of some picture-frame, a face hung on the wall, the blazonry on some book, the chance phrase on an open page—trifles like these fasten themselves on our minds. We turn dully from them, but the impression is ineffaceable. Even when the memory of the trial grows dim, it is they that keep it living.

Or we have sought under a sudden blow to escape from "the world's grey soul to the green world." On the hillside or the moor we have sat with bowed heads and downcast eyes. It seemed as if we had outlived all loves, buried all hopes. Yet through some chink the flower at our feet enters into the heart, mingles with our thought, and strangely belies our misery. The cup passes from us, and again, again we live. These hours change us, but their memory clings round that single thing: the flower which we never see without the whole sorrow and relief returning. As Rossetti has expressed it in his poem "The Woodspurge":

"The wind flapped loose, the wind was still,
Shaken out dead from tree and hill:
I had walked on at the wind's will,—
I sat now, for the wind was still.

"Between my knees my forehead was,—
My lips, drawn in, said not Alas!
My hair was over in the grass,
My naked ears heard the day pass.

"My eyes, wide open, had the run
Of some ten weeds to fix upon;
Among these few, out of the sun,
The woodspurge flowered, three cups in one.

"From perfect grief there need not be
Wisdom or even memory :
One thing then learnt remains to me,—
The woodspurge has a cup of three."

II. There must be more in the words than this. Was not the presence of the wild beasts an element in our Lord's temptation ?

Did He not see in their eyes an appeal from their misery ? Was He not quick to behold the earnest expectation of the creatures waiting for the manifestation of the Son of God ? Did He not long for the day which Esaias saw in vision, when the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, when the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and the sucking-child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child put his hand on the basilisk's den, and they shall not hurt nor destroy in all God's holy mountain,—that day when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea ? We cannot tell ; but surely the wild beasts were to Him as they will be to all in the regeneration. Even yet some men exercise strange powers over them ; and when He, the creating Word, the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, beheld them in His dumb agony, did they

not cease one moment to groan and travail, as if they saw their hope in His grief?

III. For "all creatures can be tamed." The beasts share in our punishment, but not in our guilt. *They* can be won, but man resists. His heart is evil, restless, full of deadly poison. It was to win and purge that heart the Son of God descended, and the arch-temptation was to gain this victory by a shorter and swifter way than the dolorous path. "All the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them," if He had these (so the whisper ran) deliverance would come sooner. These mute appeals, these lowly claims of the wild beasts reinforced the Tempter. But He drove the temptation from Him. The kingdom of glory could not be hastened so. The good day would come in God's time and in God's way; the reign of evil would be undone. So, in compassion for all His travailing creation, His soul went on to travail.

"Get thee behind me, Satan,

Leave these weak feet to tread in narrow ways;
Thou still upon the broad vine-sheltered path
May'st wait the turning of the vials of wrath
For certain years, for certain months and days."

RECOLLECTION

When thou hast shut thy door.—MATT. vi. 6.

RECOLLECTION, said Richard Cecil, is the life of true religion. It is to the soul, said another, what sleep is to the body; without it must come fever, collapse, and death. The soul that does not gather itself together and abide steadfast at the centre will soon be spent. A return to the well-head is the condition of renewed constant vigour and fertility. We live amidst unprecedented activity and growing discontent. The outward agencies of the Church were never so demonstrative; they almost keep pace with the world; but no one is satisfied with their results. "Life hurries on, spreads itself far and wide, but the source of life dries up." Dispersed amid the multitude of things external, Christian people are forgetting that mental and spiritual progress consist in intensifying the

inward life—that abiding and fruitful Christian work can only be accomplished by serious and refreshed souls.

Recollection is the fixed thought of the Redeeming God carried into all things. It is the calm, collected mood of those who set the Lord always before them, to whom every common vessel has been made a sacramental chalice, because all life has become a true communion with God in Christ. It is not necessarily the repression of activity; it is its intensification. If it be true that the world is in a hard strait, and that the duty of Christian men to-day is to turn aside from everything and to employ their whole force to set forward the perilous course of the mighty vessel freighted with the human race, recollection will not hinder this zeal. But the “sad heart tires in a mile.” The world will not be overcome by what St. Bernard calls *evisceratio mentis*—the disembowelling of the soul. The trouble of all the Churches to-day is the slackening of the central impetus, and the one cure is recollection—the possession of the soul—the return to the abandoned sanctuary.

Perhaps the truest image of the spirit in which Christ's work should be done is the Christian mood fronting death—the Christian mood as we

know it in St. Paul. To what brief and grand simplicity all things are then reduced ! The soul occupied with the essence of its creed—the Saviour, the Trust, the Day—is full of triumph. The confusion and defeat of the moment—the near death of shame, the coldness of the Roman Church, the tainting and failing of the little handfuls of believers in vast cities—Paul saw them as they were seen by Christ, whose appearing he had loved and did love. Isaac Taylor tells us that when his sister thought herself dying, she deliberately refused many invitations, though to accept them might have given her a chance of recovery. “She trembled at the danger of losing sight of her highest hopes ; she wished now to call home her thoughts and to converse with her own heart without interruption.” This “calling home of thoughts ” is recollection.

Some general helps to recollection may be stated, however incompletely. Perfect simplicity of life and feeling can rarely be reached without sacrificing some part of our possessions and our work. There is no rule ; every believer has to find how he may best live for himself the life of the true Christian. It is certain that the demands of society are a chief foe to recollection. The

last Babylon is a place of merchandise, where the souls of men are sold. John Woolman says, "Universal love reconciles the mind to a life so plain that a little doth suffice to support it, a life of simplicity and sufficiency where the real comforts of life are not lessened." It is assuredly true that many do nothing because they try to do much. It is not the will of God that any should undertake all kinds of labour. It is not the will of God that men should elect forms of service for which they have no capacity. He does not take the pencil from the artist, the pen from the ready writer, and turn these men into preachers. He asks each to glorify Him where he stands, to take possession for God of the channels in which his strength is flowing. He asks preachers to be preachers. Why is the gift of prophecy dying among us? Is it not because preachers mistake for a righteous activity what is really a fatal indolence? They throw their strength into many things when it was meant that they should gather it all—in the most recollected spirit—for the divine work of prophesying to the men of their own day. Who can preach with power whose mind is not deep in heavenly things, who does not face constantly eastwards amidst the whirl of life?

For true recollection we must be occupied with the immediate duty That is really all we have to do with. Yet Christian workers in our day are being crushed with the burden of the past and the future. With these we have no concern. The past may inspire us, but looking unto Jesus we have a present help. It does not trouble us. in the kingdom of priests we are loosed from our sins. It does not dishearten us ; God is with His people still. The future is His, not ours. We have no concern with one day of it. When we sit with Christ in heavenly places we pass already into the nobler order ; we see all things put under Him. But the times, the seasons, the circumstances—these things should not load us with the lightest burden. Nor are we to be overmuch concerned about outward activities. There be those who make themselves miserable when they do not write a book every year, or when they do not fill up a long calendar of engagements. When it is the will of Christ we must hold ourselves ready to speak, to act, to fight. When it is not, we please Him by retiring into that recollection within the central source of light in which so many were once wisely content to spend their lives. Their activities might be

rare, but their force will tell on the universe for ever.

It is about its own present duty that the recollected soul concerns itself. We waste our days in thinking about what others should do, in laying down commandments for them, in lamenting over their remissness. Were every one to make sure that his own life was lived with an habitual conscious reference to God, in the intense performance of the duty calling him, in the enriching of his soul by meditation and prayer, the will of God would be done. Christian men would come near one another in that unity of the spirit which can never be forced or contrived.

It is hardly necessary to add that the life of recollection is supremely a life of prayer—a life of prayer with others, but chiefly a life of prayer in the closet. As Pascal says, it abides in its own room. Its first precept is “Shut to the door.” There it seeks light, peace, strength in the most hidden recollection. So the soul discovers that it has power with God. It reveals to Him its own natural longings. But its will is subordinate to His—it is at last, as a great master of the spiritual life has not shrunk from saying, “steeped sevenfold in the blood of the Lamb.”

THE DANGER AND THE PAIN OF THE PURE

Hereafter I will not talk much with you, for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.—JOHN xiv. 30.

THERE is something of paradox in this word which arrests attention. He speaks as if He could not talk because He had to fight. The fight was manifestly to Him the gravest of all struggles—it was with the prince of this world—and yet He declared that the prince of this world had nothing in Him. What makes a conflict with the prince of evil so terrible to us is that he has so much in us. Yet to Christ the terror of the battle was that Satan had nothing in Him, and so great was this terror that He could hardly spare strength to speak.

I. Our Lord's words cost Him something: "Hereafter I will not talk much with you." "What," says a famous writer, "is anything

worth until it is uttered? Is not the universe one great utterance? Utterance there must be in word or deed to make life of any worth. Every true pentecost is a gift of utterance." But for the most part our words are idle; they come with no sweat of brain or heart. Yet never can we say anything fruitful, or sweet, or strong, without cost—without labour, feeling, effort, soul, behind it. Every word of Jesus will outlive earth and heaven. To the end, all His recorded utterances continually will disclose further and yet further deeps of meaning. He talked much, more than we know; yet if we may dare say it, He could afford to waste no word, and when He girded Himself for the last battle, He fell silent.

II. "*Hereafter* I will not talk much with you." Solemn are the silencings of life, the strange hush that drops on lips once gay, free, lilting.

"You took my heart in your hand,
With a friendly smile,
With a critical eye you scanned,
Then set it down.

* * * *

As you set it down it broke—
Broke, but I did not wince;
I smiled at the speech you spoke,
At your judgment that I heard;

But I have not often smiled
Since then, nor questioned much,
Nor cared for cornflowers wild,
Nor sung with the singing bird."

He means it—this stilling of pulse and voice—whether it comes after the battle or before, and His purpose is that our life, if more silent to man, should be fuller of utterance to Him.

III. See our Lord's estimate of Satan. To Him the enemy of souls was terrible ; how much more to us. Our war is still with elements which no progress of civilisation can rob of a single weapon. We wrestle not with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world. No possible social progress can ever change materially the conditions of the spiritual warfare, where our first foe is Satan.

IV. But whence the terror of the struggle to One in whose pure heart the enemy had no place? We can only compare remotely our own case with His, for Christ was never at any point peccable, and the obedience which He learned through suffering was simply the concrete experience of what He had to pass through that He might fulfil His calling as the author of eternal salvation. But when we descend to the brothers and sisters, humanly frail, whom we nevertheless

not untruly call pure, we can understand how the danger and the pain of the temptation may be greatest in their case.

The danger, for they are ignorant. They have never looked over the gulf. They do not even know that they are on the edge. They are ignorant of the devices of Satan.

The pain, for as region after region of a pure nature is invaded by the breath of pollution the agony is far keener than that of a more or less seared nature. The more innocent a human soul, the more terrible is the knowledge of evil, and the discovery that something to which that evil appeals lurks within itself.

The secrets of the grim, silent battle fought by our Head, we cannot tell. Thereafter He did not talk much. But we know that He sweated great drops of blood; that He prayed that if it were possible the cup might pass from Him; that He turned round in His agony to see beside Him the mild and holy face of an angel who had brought Him strength from heaven. In that strength He prevailed for Himself, and in Him we may "triumph so," and find at last—

"Under our feet for ever

The enemies of our souls,

“HE DESCENDED INTO HELL”

The forerunner.—HEB. vi. 20.

IN this Easter meditation we shall not enter into controversies which, for complexity and bitterness, have hardly been equalled even in Christian theology. In one of Sydney Dobell's fine fragments, he makes an awakening soul say:

“This is hell, then—
And He descended into hell.”

There have been manifold speculations as to Christ's open triumph over principalities and powers—as to His preaching to the spirits in prison, and much besides. Let it suffice us that He descended into Hades, the abode of the departed. Thus He took our journey over the “tracts unknown” which lie between this world and that. Even there shall His hand lead us and His right hand hold us. He shared for the

space of three days what is the experience of all the saints, save those who remain unto His coming. He submitted Himself to the whole law of the human lot—His spirit was free among the dead, while His body waited the appointed day. *Forasmuch as the children were partakers . . . He Himself took part of the same*, and so He holds the keys of all our possible experience. We have to think, then, of the words as illuminating the unknown way, and as teaching us what waits when the new gate opens into life, and we are in the unveiled presence of the Incarnate Word.

First, then, because His spirit has gone before, He can say to each believer, in the article of death, Follow me. We have to pass "across the wilds that no man knows" to the awful worlds of the future. It is the mysterious journey—not the end—from which many a humble, faithful soul shrinks. "I have no fear of going to heaven," said one, "but *the crossing, the crossing!*" As we near the end, that great gulf between the familiar world and the hills of heaven stretches dark and wide at our feet. But "He descended into Hades." Christ died in the light. His body was anointed for burial by trembling

and stained hands. But for His soul's journey He needed no chrism: He was going home. "O God, when Thou wentest forth before Thy people, when Thou didst march through the wilderness . . . Thou didst confirm Thine inheritance when it was weary."

What will this state be which we shall find at the end of the way? When the body has fallen from us—when the senses, now the feeble and rebellious ministers of the spirit, serve us no more—when the world and its shows are over—how is the unclothed soul to fare? Our Lord by His own trial knows the answer. As in Emmaus when they constrained Him He went in to tarry with them, so He shared for a season the lot of the disembodied dead. Now He is with them, the risen Christ, human and divine, fulfilling His own word, "Lo, I am with you all the days, even to the end of the world."

His presence with the faithful dead is the presence of the Incarnate Christ. It is not enough to say that our Lord is conscious and supreme. The expression, indeed, is perhaps a tautology, for it is hard to see how He could be supreme without being conscious. What we can say is that He is incarnate and supreme. A spiritual presence

of Christ in Paradise is not enough. If no more is vouchsafed, then Palestine nineteen hundred years ago was a place of greater opportunity. He was nearer the disciples who trusted Him during His earthly life, than He is to those who have come up out of the great tribulation and have washed their robes in His blood. But it is not so. The faithful now behold Him clothed in the dear familiar raiment which is more than raiment, which is part of life, and are strengthened to wait the restitution of all things which God, who cannot lie, promised by His holy prophets since the world began.

This continual presence of Christ is primarily a friendship. Even here, without love, without friendship, there is no true life. The call of affection, and that only, awakens the soul. No man knows what he can do till he has learned to love. Love blows the trumpet of resurrection over the graves where his faculties are buried, and wakens them into energy and fruitfulness. Love teaches him how he can work, and think, and feel. But in the full sense, we have no friend but our Saviour. He, and He only, touches our natures at every point. Else why the deep craving for sympathy of which the world

is full? Why are the closest ties so sharply sundered? These needs and pangs turn us to Christ; but even so we give Him no perfect answer. It is only in death, only when sin has been finally purged out, that our souls yield themselves at every point to His grace.

His presence in the next world, as in this, implies a fellowship in labour. Here it helps to unify life—to bring together all our powers—to abolish the distinction between the spiritual and the carnal. It is a lesson hard to learn. It is not easy to do all in the name of the Lord Jesus. The gulf between the religious and the secular is too wide to be bridged over by anything but a divine friendship. There the struggle is over. We are filled with a new energy. We are delivered from the old traitorous passions. The vision of the face of Christ fills the day and night, and binds our hearts by an irresistible spell.

But perhaps we are tempted to lay too much stress on labour. We know very little of the tasks to which the redeemed are set. It is their rest rather than their toil that Scripture loves to emphasise. There is something nobler than the comfort of nearness, something higher than the

tribute of service. It is sympathy—the sympathy of thought, of emotion, of character, with the goodness of Jesus Christ. A famous writer has finely applied St. Paul's words to Agrippa. There was some quality about his judge which evidently pleased the Apostle, and touched the emotions of his warm heart. At last he said, looking with benignant compassion on his unhappy hearer, "I would that thou, and all who hear me, were altogether such as I am except these bonds." *Except these bonds.* Not to be like me in circumstances, not to be near me in place, not to share my work of an evangelist, not perhaps even to think in everything as I do. These were great things, but not the greatest. The greatest was to share in the saint's view of life, in his communion with God, in his character, in his peace, in the things that made him forget his manacled hands and regard with a loving pity the poor dissolute who sat upon the throne. So greater than all the glorious offices of the heavenly life is to be one in heart with Christ.

He descended, our Forerunner, into Hades. He will return to claim from Death those bodies with which we trust Him on the sickbed, and of which He is possessor by an elder and a stronger

right. He will return ere then, according to His word, to receive our souls. As the natural force abates, we shall be reinforced with life from its Prince and Fountain, and when we are called to take the great journey, another will go with us—
One who knows the way.

FROM STRAIN TO REST

He that believeth on me, as the scripture saith, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.—JOHN vii. 38.

THE characteristic of our age is strain ; and it is certainly as perceptible in the Church as in the world. We live in such publicity, among such a thronging crowd of tidings, that there is little repose left in our lives. Fresh impressions constantly strike the brain and the heart, so that we are fretted, worn, and peaceless. Now, while the Gospel makes room for honest weariness—weariness in work, not of it—it will not tolerate our modern distraction. If Christ promised and left any gift, that gift was peace ; and those who have not proved His word there may be ignorant of it everywhere. There are deeps in Scripture to supply all our need till the probation of the Church militant has reached its appointed end.

The causes of the present religious strain are twofold ; the anxieties growing from within, and those pressing from without.

Looking inward, it cannot be said that the Christian temper of the times is indolent. Many are working up to the limit of their power, and some even beyond it. The Churches are constantly assuming fresh burdens. New services and societies are being added to those in existence, till now the Christian worker finds hardly a day—sometimes hardly an hour—unclaimed. Christians are beset by remonstrances and appeals to give more and to do more, and they are not unwilling to respond. But too often even obedience leaves them harassed and fretful. Though they have wearily abdicated leisure, their toils bring them no rest, and they find it hard to see the fruits of their self-sacrifice.

But our Lord said, "He that believeth on me, as the Scripture saith, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." In other words, there should come from the faithful an energy streaming forth like rivers flowing eastward, westward, northward, southward. Theirs should be a life which fills the world with blessing as quietly as the sunrise. It should and it might be like His

own life, for its secret is such an indwelling of the Spirit as He Himself possessed. None breathed so deeply of the Holy Ghost as Christ did, and so His life was calm at the heart, for all its outward tumult. It was never loveless ; the Father loveth the Son. It was never perplexed ; He saw clearly what the Father did. Our Lord never needed to ask the way ; He had the Spirit of wisdom and revelation. He was never the slave of appearances ; never deceived by the show of things. Even in front of the cross He saw His throne, and so death, like life, became a solemn act of worship ; through the Eternal Spirit He offered Himself without spot to God.

The same peace filled His apostles, and was meant for us. If we are to have it, the gaining and the keeping of it must go before all else. It is granted only to prayer and faith, and without the exercises of devotion it cannot live. Whatever else we find time for, there must be time for these. Work which interrupts them is work to which we have no divine call. To please men—even Christian men—is to give over the service of Christ. Is there a drearier sight in the world than to witness a poor worn-out creature spurring on fellow-beings equally jaded to work more and

give more ? We have heard such people actually disparaging meditation as a spiritual "luxury !" But the indwelling of the Spirit comes first, and without Him there is no blessing on toil.

For it is by saving ourselves that we save others, and only so. Work out your own salvation : that is our first business. It is indeed the one business of life which is ours, our own. Nor could anything be shallower than the notion that this is selfish work. It is by working out our own salvation that we are able to work out the salvation of others. The Gospel is not like a spell or nostrum which produces its effects through any one who commands it. It is not a power of miracle which may belong to a man whatever his spiritual condition. *He that believeth on me out of him shall flow rivers of living water.* To be filled with the Holy Spirit is to be filled with power. It is to be uplifted, relieved, vitalised, so that all life and every word becomes an effectual ministry of the Gospel. We all know it. There is power in those whom the Spirit possesses, and in them only—not the power of rhetoric or learning or brilliancy, but the spell which binds souls. This is a ministry exercised without strain or weariness or burdensome self-

consciousness. It is a ministry not intermittent, but constant; and it may be, as one has said, that if fully inhabited by the Spirit, Christians might give out superhuman manifestations as freely as intellectual force.

Life in the Spirit reverses and counteracts the forces of disintegration and decay. How busy these are, and how ready are we to yield to them! How soon we close the door—give over hoping—confess ourselves of the older generation with our best work past. But in Christ our youth is renewed like the eagle's. Time flows on, bringing his appointed signs. But grey hairs and diminished strength bear false witness against us if we are filled with the Holy Ghost. Whatever the past has been, the future may be better. If it has been barren and faithless, there is time to repair it; if it has been full of trust and labour, the time to come may be marked by faith more peaceful and labour more abundant. Age need touch our spirits as little as it touched the young angels in the holy grave, and life before God may be an ascent from height to height till we appear at last in Zion.

There is strain also from the pressure of outward circumstances. We are chilled by mists of

speculation, perplexed by the mockery of unbelief. "The nineteenth century, that is the Messiah," says a French sceptic, and indeed to weak faith it seems as if this Messiah were to displace Christ. And even those more believing are often troubled by the slow progress, it may be the apparent retrogression of Christian causes. Around them there may be nothing to cheer, much to depress. It is hard to keep hope glowing year after year where there are "none to praise and very few to love." But here again we say that if Christ and His apostles ever comprehended any sorrow and provided for it, it was that. For that sorrow was their own—their lifelong cross.

One might say that, in spite of newspapers and conferences and statistics, it is impossible to be sure whether true Christianity is flourishing or not. We do not know. Particular organisations may thrive; but the prosperity may be hollow. Others may apparently decline, and in reality grow. We are soldiers in the great army, and cannot tell how the fight is going over the whole field. But even if we could, it is true now as when the words were spoken, that "No man can say Jesus is Lord but by the Holy Ghost." By faith and prayer the soul may become a temple

which the Spirit inhabits with a constant light. If the windows of the soul are lit from within, the light will shine all the brighter for the surrounding darkness. How was it in our Lord's time? How few the sheaves He brought with Him! Yet how royally He bore Himself through His humiliation. And the apostles—they shame us in the height and splendour of their faith. Let us remember that they wrote from superb heathen cities—Ephesus, Corinth, Athens, and Rome. They knew how things were. “Wholly given over to idolatry,” is St. Paul's brief verdict on Athens, through which he wandered solitary, separated unto the Gospel of God. Yet how calmly they confronted all! “In nothing terrified by your adversaries,” steadfast, quietly fearless, indomitably hopeful. Such should our spirit be in the face of the world, whether it seems to smile or frown. We shall soon know how long the conflict will last, and watch it from the heights of victory; it need not disturb us now. If only we have grace to be faithful a little longer!

THE SIN AGAINST THE HOLY GHOST

Whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him ; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world nor in the world to come.—MATT. xii. 32.

THE sensitiveness of this critical age is very wonderful. Considering the immense number of insignificant persons who are favoured with paragraphs and biographies in papers, one might imagine that the great majority would regard with composure what was written about them. This patience might at least be looked for from those whose main occupation it is to abuse their fellow creatures. As a matter of fact, this equanimity is very rare, even among the greatest. Mr. Gladstone, in his curious chapter of autobiography, tells us that a silly electioneering placard once almost unmanned him. "It freezes the blood in moments of retirement and reflection for a man to think that he can have presented a picture so

hideous to the view of a fellow creature." More authors than would easily be believed have the criticisms of their books "broken" to them. George Eliot and Dickens could not read theirs at all. There is something very ignoble about this. At all events, the person who cannot endure criticism should refrain from criticising.

In singular contrast with this is the majestic and calm temper of Christ, summed up in that marvellous saying, *Whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him.* Mark the tremendous assumption—that the critic is always wrong. Never a word is said against the Son of Man that can be justified. More, no one ever speaks against the Son of Man without sinning. But the sin does not place him beyond the reach of mercy. He will be—forgiven. The sentence might have ended differently. It might have been, *Whosoever shall speak against the Son of Man shall be—answered? silenced? punished?* No—forgiven. Did Christ ever assert His divinity more absolutely and yet more benignantly?

Whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man: it is a pitiful business, but it has been practised. There have been attempts made to

show the sinfulness of the human life of Jesus. Happily, they have been few. Foes of Christianity have, as a rule, stopped short of attacking the Christ Himself. The exceptions are hardly known, and to answer them is needless. On all sides there is a feeling that they need not reply, but pardon. Still, we may admit that some have stumbled by reason of misconception. They have misunderstood. We know that to meet a man face to face often melts and scatters the misjudgment and hate of years. To come into the full light is what Christ asks of such as doubt. He will give them satisfaction and absolution, though those souls are happiest who from childhood unto death have yielded Him the unbroken service of intellect and will. But while to speak a word against Himself, His person, His action on particular occasions, may be a temporary error and may be pardoned, to speak against His Spirit is the unpardonable sin.

Whosoever shall speak against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world nor in the world to come. There is one sin so heinous that it closes for all ages and in all worlds every door of mercy. The soul that sins it will never be revived by any divine spring. It is no

mysterious transgression to be struck upon at an unknown stage in the prodigal's path. It is no sudden, angry blasphemy. Whoever fears that he has committed it and prays for pardon is worlds away from it. It is the sin of those who know Christ in His essence, who realise His Spirit for what He is, and who deliberately call Him unclean. The historical Christ may be misjudged. Our teachers may misrepresent Him. We may speak a word against Him without the purpose deliberately to sever our life from His. But when His Spirit—the Spirit of compassion and purity—is known and hated, then the endless alienation has begun.

Compassion is the first word which describes the Spirit of Christ. It is a deep word—deeper almost than love, as the mother knows who has seen her child in the delirium of fever. Christ came to bring in the reign of righteousness, but before and after justice is pity. The march of justice is slow: to be tracked by altars of sacrifice. Slowly we come to purer laws, but meanwhile deepest in man's lot is suffering that cannot wait. To this Christ stretched forth His hand. Marking as He did with pity those who knew their evil case, and with a deeper pity those who did

not, He went about healing all manner of sickness and disease among the people. He set in motion the while those mighty forces that are gradually transforming the world. But compassion had to do its work first, and when justice is done in the ideal commonwealth, compassion will take up the work again. But He saw the universal misery as the result of sin. The fangs of the Serpent had done this. He set Himself, therefore, not to reform, but to save. He believed that men could be saved. His inseparable following from the very dregs of society proclaimed that the kingdom of heaven was for publicans and harlots. He lowered not a jot the standard of purity while He declared that those who came to Him would in no wise be cast out. When at last He lifted His eyes to God from His long brooding over earthly woe, His thought was of peace and joy. This is the Spirit of Christ—the Spirit of compassion, of purity, and hope. To see this and to speak against it is the blasphemy that eternally severs the creature from the Creator.

It was a sin of Christ's own day, for He said in His last hours: *They have both seen and hated both me and my Father.* To see and to hate—there is no cloak for that. Is it a sin of ours? Are

there any in this generation in danger of the unpardonable sin? We may not judge. But there are grave portents. How many hate to hear of the sorrow and oppression of their brothers and sisters! How many have never given out of their abundance anything to alleviate the pangs of the needy! How many never mention, save with the utmost bitterness and scorn, those whose lives are a long conflict with sin and misery! How many scoff at the very idea of purity, denounce those who seek to keep it alive in the world as Pharisees and hypocrites, and mock at the possibility of a wanderer's return! The Christian's creed is different:

"I believe in self-denial,
And its secret throb of joy;
In the love that lives through trial,
Dying not though death destroy:
In those fond and full believings
That though all the world deceive,
Will not let its dark deceivings
Wake suspicion—I believe.

"I believe in Love renewing
All that sin hath swept away,
Leaven-like its work pursuing,
Night by night and day by day
In the power of its remoulding,
In the grace of its reprieve,
In the glory of beholding
Its perfection—I believe,"

Why is the sin against the Holy Ghost past forgiveness? Not because God is vindictive. Not that He is unwilling to grant pardon for that sin as for all the rest. Simply because pardon will never be sought. The cynic—the scoffer at the Spirit of pity and purity—will not change his mind when it is made clear to him that Jesus Christ is Lord. He will believe and hate, as the devils do, in the face of the fruits of Christ's travail—in the day when He leads the captives of death captive before the throne of God.

THE SORROWS OF THE NIGHT

More than they that watch for the morning.

PS. cxxx. 6.

FEW have gone far along life's way without understanding what it is to watch for the morning. The invalid, helpless, sleepless, every nerve strained, with a great weight of confused woe heavy on his breast, welcomes the chill light, though it brings but little respite—though he can only say, “Risest thou thus, dim dawn, again?” Even in full strength, when we lie awake at night, there may come to us all the cruel possibilities of the future, as well as all the real anxieties of the present, till there is no more spirit left in us. But when the morning dawns, when we put on the armour of light, we are stronger to meet our foes.

Perhaps the sorrows of the night were never felt so little as now, when people fly to narcotics on the slightest provocation. In other times they

were well understood. Whether the pain was of the body or the soul it ached on unallayed. Rousseau has a striking phrase, *les frayeurs nocturnes*, and the Middle Ages in particular knew those terrors in all their forms. It is this which gives their tenderness to the Provençal songs of the morning. We find the same strange effect in the poems of William Morris, nowhere so perfectly as in these lovely, consummate lines :

" Pray but one prayer for me 'twixt thy closed lips,
 Think but one thought of me up in the stars ;
 The summer light waneth, the morning light slips
 Faint and grey 'twixt the leaves of the aspen, betwixt the
 cloud bars
 That are patiently waiting there for the dawn :
 Patient and colourless, though heaven's gold
 Waits to float through them along with the sun.
 Far out in the meadows above the young corn
 The heavy elms wait, and restless and cold
 The uneasy wind rises ; the roses are dun ;
 Through the long twilight they pray for the dawn
 Round the lone house in the midst of the corn.
 Speak but one word to me over the corn,
 Over the tender bowed locks of the corn."

There is another coming desired more eagerly by the Christian heart, and promised by Jesus Christ Himself when He spoke the word, *Hereafter ye shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven*. This phrase cannot be reduced

and tamed into anything short of lunacy if Christ was not divine. This second advent is continually insisted on by Himself and His apostles ; its solemn note resounds through exhortation, comfort, and warning. Yet in our day it is largely ignored in Christian teaching, and is left as the heritage of comparatively small and obscure companies, who encumber it with false and doubtful interpretations. But the truth itself is independent of all these entanglements. It is simply that Christ is to appear suddenly, and the time may be close upon us ; we are to be ready, for in such an hour as we think not the Son of Man may come.

What is the significance of this expectation to us ? How is it to alter and colour our lives ? We do not look for the Appearing in our own life here. As we have parted with the dear ones who, like ourselves, have been partakers of the power of His resurrection, we have felt that we, too, must die, and the clods of the valley have been sweet. We have looked to join our own among the shaded glories under the Altar-Throne, there to wait and pray for the adoption. But we should think of the advent as near, even at the doors, all the days we go out and in. Christ is with

us according to His promise, but He stands by us unseen, and in spite of all His gifts there is still a hiding of His power. The meaning of the promise is that the fight will not go on for ever, that the flux and reflux of the tide of battle will at last cease, that a decisive interposition will end the war, and that the Son of Man will purge His kingdom of all things that offend, and them that do iniquity. Since Christ came, all have owned that a new force is astir, but we see not yet all things put under Him. Nor will they ever be by the operation of the forces now at work. We are to work and watch, to give the household meat in due season, to be faithful and wise servants; but it is not thus that the kingdom shall perfectly come. We are to meet in simple, earnest trust and hope all difficulty and antagonism; but the striving, broken, troubled Church has in her heart the promise of a new, conquering energy of omnipotence, which will come crashing in upon this weary sameness when hope has fallen lowest and faith is ready to die. "The march of time has not been towards a far-off eternity, but along the margin of that mysterious ocean by which it must be engulfed at last, and into which,

fragment by fragment, the beach it treads is crumbling."

But the day and hour we know not. Even the angels in heaven know not. More wonderful and touching still, this secret was kept from the Son in His humiliation. He consented to be ignorant of the time when His work should reach its term. We may reverently conjecture that this was one drop in His cup, that the tumult and anguish of His soul were not complete without it, that to sympathise with us perfectly He must know the turmoil of our spirits in expecting the end. Perhaps He meant to teach us that the best help for present duty and suffering is always to be expecting the second advent, always to be ignorant of the time. We are to fight as if no new succours were to come, we are to fight knowing that they are coming, it may be in our day, it may be after we have died on the field, but that with them the victory is sure. But the belief that even now the Lord is at hand will ever help to keep us in the earnest purity of the girded loins and the burning lamp, and deliver us from any hope that falls short of God.

Why do we hear so little of the great hope of the Church? Is it because we have been sub-

dued by naturalism, and have ceased to believe in the flashing of the lightning from one end of heaven to the other, and the appearing of the sign of the Son of Man? Or has the Church succumbed to narcotics, and ceased to feel her wounds? It is by the weakening of this hope, says Calvin, that Satan aims directly at the throat of the Church. Over against disappointments and weariness we set again the old assurance—Behold, He cometh with clouds; and we know not in what hour.

Finding the fixed times endure
Of day and night which never brought
Sounds of His coming chariot,
Would'st lift through cloud-waste unexplored
These eyes which said, "How long, O Lord?"

* * * * *

Yet "Surely I come quickly"—so
He said, from life and death gone home
Amen: even so, Lord Jesus, come.

Keeping this hope, the Church will be delivered from the alliances, compromises, and expedients that are her shame, and abide in the faith of her supernatural origin, life, and triumph.

So, "Neither to the right hand, nor to the left, Children of the Promise, but on high!"

IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS

Not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.—PHIL. iii. 9.

NO doctrine has been more vehemently denounced than that of imputed righteousness. "It is," says one, "a mean, nauseous invention, false, and productive of falsehood. Say it is a figure ; I answer, it is not only a false figure, but an embodiment of untruth." It is in the name of truth that it is condemned. Does God, it is said, cloak foulness with a white robe, and deceive Himself into taking it for cleanness ? Does He allow the sores to be covered so that He may not see them, and does He accept the covering for healing ? It is an immoral fiction, we are told. God sees us just as we are ; the whole sickness and sin of the heart is before Him, and the only righteousness is that which we win for ourselves

by conquering sin, a righteousness visible alike to God and man.

Yet St. Paul says that he counted all things dross that he might be found in Christ; not having his own righteousness, which was of the law, but that which was through the faith of Christ—the righteousness which was of God by faith. He said this in one of his most intimate and personal epistles. Canon Liddon tells us in his *Life of Bishop Hamilton of Salisbury*, that the Bishop's favourite Scriptures were the prophecy of Hosea in the Old Testament, and the Epistle to the Philippians in the New Testament: the latter because in it St. Paul so frankly unbared his own heart, and the vastness of the love and pity of Jesus Christ. The Apostle, writing to the Philippians, felt that he was understood. To be understood is what we all crave for, and our true selves are never shown save in the sunshine of comprehension. The shyness of young people comes from the feeling that they are not understood. Once let a man feel that he is thoroughly understood, and he asks no more. What is best in him then finds easy and complete expression. We see here how St. Paul expressed himself—one who lived greatly if any man ever

did, one than whom none ever thought of God more nobly and of himself more humbly, one who craved for reality—how such an one spoke in his simplest and frankest mood. It is hard to believe that he was speaking in the interests of untruth and immorality when he thus told the secret of the peace he had won by fleeing from God to God.

Is the truth about a man simply the truth about his present failures and sins? Suppose all these are known at their worst, is this a complete knowledge of the man? No. Knowing a man thus we may know him as little as the dogs that licked the sores of Lazarus knew of the sweet soul that was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. God knew Paul's sins, but He knew more. God who searched him, and tried him, and knew his thoughts, and led him in the everlasting way, saw him crucified with Christ, alive in Christ, and clothed with Christ's perfect righteousness. And this, and nothing less, was knowledge.

God saw Paul separated from his evil past by the faith of Christ. The Apostle looked back on his life, not as they do for whom human love has been the greatest thing in the world. Of this—its passionate, brief raptures, its grand and long-

abiding woes—St. Paul knew little. He saw his past partly as a persecution of Christ in His Church, partly as a fierce and vain ambition. The spectre of our age is law. They tell us that there is no making head against the nature of things, no escaping from the consequences of our sins. The terror would be more appalling were it not that those who fear it think it will haunt them only for the few years between them and the endless sleep. St. Paul represented it under his own forms of thought, but it was the same enemy he encountered. His ambition was achieved: touching the righteousness of the law he was blameless: but he had been grasping a shadow. But his guilty past had been undone by the woe of Christ; and for the righteousness of the twilight he had put on the righteousness of the day. Infinite love, by its last act and token, had atoned for his sin and bought him back from his slavery. We move here amid ultimate expressions which cannot be analysed or made plainer, but may be understood by whosoever will. When God looked on Paul He saw him justified from all things by the righteousness of Christ, and knew him for one of the ransomed.

Next, the vision of God saw through and round

the sores and stains, and discerned the Apostle rooted in Christ. Not only was the past gone, the guilt of sin removed, but life had been purified at its springs. Paul had been nailed to the cross with Christ, and lived because Christ lived in him. His life in the flesh was lived by the faith of the Son of God, who loved him and atoned for him. So the true self underneath all infirmities was in Christ, of Christ, like Christ, and that God saw. Is the true view of anyone the mere vision of sores? In the supreme gladness of human life, the hour when the soul surrenders itself to another, are we to say that it is deluded? No; for it has found the ideal—not what is at the moment, but that which shall be when life clothes itself in its final beauty. “Which, after all, is the truest and deepest estimate of a man? That which is based upon his actual imperfections and failures, or that which penetrates through all these, and sees only the divine idea of the man, the glorious strength, and incorruptible faith, and stainless purity, and unselfish devotion which are possible to him? That which is seen in a man is temporal; that which is unseen, or seen only to the heart that loves him, is eternal.” So God sees us in Christ: we are found in Christ, not

having our own righteousness ; the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us—the righteousness which is of God by faith. And this is no legal fiction, but the vision of love and truth.

Nor is this all. God saw that as Paul lived on year by year in Christ, and Christ in Paul, the Apostle was dying unto sin, that the blemishes which marred the great soul were vanishing away. All might see it : Paul himself saw it, though the last to see it. Wonderful lights and shadows passed over his mind : in work and warfare he rested only on the blood and righteousness of Christ. But when the end was very near, his life drew itself up into its true grandeur before his own eyes. He looked over his battle and knew that it had been good. He had kept the faith. He saw before him the shining crown of righteousness and life. And his entrance into heaven was no violent transition, but “like a northern midnight, when the rose of evening becomes suddenly and silently a rose of dawn.”

Paul was speaking, then, not for an immoral fiction, but for the deep and righteous truth, and what was true of him is true in measure and essence for all believers. They, too, standing in Christ, tremble at the past no more. They

have been loosed from their sins in His own blood. Stained, feeble, unworthy though they are, they are branches in the True Vine, and God sees them as they will appear with Christ their Life in glory. He watches their war with sin, and will bruise Satan under their feet shortly. The world sees them loaded with the past, full of sins and frailties, waging a seemingly hopeless battle, and thinks it knows them. But their Maker knows better: He knows all. He sees them white in atoning blood, beautiful with imputed righteousness, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST

That I may know him.—PHIL. iii. 10.

WE have seen how St. Paul entrenched himself in a fortress that could not be stormed. His own righteousness of the law he had cast aside, but clothed in the robe of a perfect righteousness he would not stand shelterless in the hail of judgment. But to win Christ and to be found in Him was not enough. St. Paul aspired after full redemption, which is more than happiness, more than safety. He had put his soul in such keeping as assured its weal, and he longed to know Him, the unseen Lord and Friend who had taken it in charge. To search out His love, His truth, His grace, was work for all the days Christ willed him to travel here.

This was not a knowledge after the flesh. To know Christ as he might have known one in the

next street—to quote a current sneer—would have been nothing to him, for if God is no nearer us than that we are lost. He sought to know the Redeemer as He is now that the limits of the flesh are removed, abiding in the eternal glory, and yet present with His people all the days, even unto the end. And as such knowledge is attained only by the constant exercise of the grace of faith, he tells us how Christ reveals Himself in the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings.

Grace is the New Testament word for force; and there are hours in every Christian life when the power of the Risen Christ is manifestly victorious over suffering and weakness. His love is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. Against the most terrible antagonists faith makes her triumph good. When the fiery pillar of hope, followed through eager years, turns its dark side, a strange buoyancy fills the spirit; we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. We stand by the fresh grave, and look up to see a deeper rift in heaven. When it seems as if the earthly life with its strength and courage were slipping away from us, we look into the air, not empty of light, and see the descending city of God. Or we may

be able to trace with no base complacency the advance of the divine life in our souls, the gradual eradication and subdual of evil. But with many it is not so. We cannot feel that we are gaining ground. A deeper knowledge of the Commandments, and a more earnest effort to keep them, reveals the distance still between us and perfect conformity to the will of God. Temptations after years of resistance still possess their spell, and sometimes overpower us. Life that should be so warm is often cold and weary, and Christ seems far away. We are so proud, so wilful, so ready to confuse personal ambition and passion with zeal for God, that often our spirit flags and droops, and we almost doubt whether we have an interest in Christ at all.

In such hours it is wise to take a retrospect of our soul's life, and see how we have been led. After all these years we still yearn for the smile of Christ: we have not parted company with the faithful and their Saviour; we are still trying to do the will of God. What is this but the power of Christ's resurrection? So terrible was the evil within us, the stone that remained unbroken in the heart of flesh, so constant and overwhelming the assaults from without, that only grace could

have kept us from eternal destruction. How many we have seen swept away, the victims of pride and lust ; and we, as weak and as tempted as any of them all, have been kept. We look back and see how all the while One was with us, loving, guiding, saving. Something turned us at the very threshold of transgression ; something baulked us after conscience ceased to struggle ; a sudden thought came into our hearts and quenched the flame that would have laid life in ruins. The longer we think, memory recovers more and more of such things, and we begin to understand. Our heart swells, our love rises up as we think of the mighty and gentle Friend who has been delivering us day by day from ourselves and from the world. As one thought crowds on another, the picture shapes itself into unity and we know Christ at last.

As one comes on the diary of his dead mother and reads how she loved him, bore with him, prayed with him, suffered for him, the past is interpreted ; she rises out of her grave in a new and deathless beauty. What was seen only in gleams and flickerings is known for a great fire of love that never ceased to burn. The heart discerned only through narrow chinks and aper-

tures is revealed in its completeness ; the sacred and pure image passes among the treasures of the soul.

In the fellowship of His sufferings, also, St. Paul knew Christ. Deep is the simple comfort of

His way was much rougher and darker than mine,
Christ the Lord of all suffered, and shall I repine ?

To mark the track of Christ on the lonely road of sorrow and loss is often to feel Him at our side, when all the sadness goes. But Paul meant more ; the thought he breathed was not sudden or casual, but a great part of his being. Baptised into Jesus Christ, he was baptised into His death. He was crucified with Christ. He filled up in his own flesh that which was lacking of the afflictions of Christ. He bore about in his body the putting to death of the Lord Jesus. The awful language of the Passion is familiar on his lips. True, he never claimed part in the all-sufficient sacrifice of propitiation. As his ablest living scholar testifies, Paul never confuses thoughts, never ceases to think exactly, even when his expressions are most difficult. But the great heaviness and continual sorrow with which he brooded over lost man was the spirit of the Mediator, and as

it grew deeper and more passionate with every hour of life, he knew Christ, and entered into His very heart. Between Paul and the Redeemer that look had passed which is never exchanged save between those who have been in the fires together. And it is in proportion as we share Christ's agony, and yearning, and pain over the sin of man that we know Him. He is revealed to us most completely as our companion on a sacrificial journey.

BROUGHT HOME

Carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom.—LUKE xvi. 22.

I will come again, and receive you unto myself.—JOHN xiv. 3.

PERHAPS the greatest part of the darkness and terror of death is that all is taken out of our hands. Doubtless behind every step of the way to God there is the secret of the predestination of souls. Salvation is not of our own achieving. God, who did not wait to love us till this "late lonely moment which we call our life," calls, and justifies, and glorifies. But save at the last, there is the consciousness of labour and effort on our own part, and it is only when these are over that we perceive how God has been working in a mystery of eternal love. In death, even when it has been fully accepted and long waited for, there is ever the sense of suddenness, helplessness, which is so overwhelming when the end comes to those snatched away in the fulness of

love and hope. How much more is this true of the journey to the unseen world and the ultimate goal of the spirit. No earthly love can brighten that untried way, or help to make a home in the new conditions. The departed—and this is the first bitterness of death—are indeed withdrawn from our care.

When the whole heart is faint, we are ready to think that we are as ignorant as we are powerless. But *I would not have you to be ignorant concerning them which are asleep* is the tender word of Revelation. Much has been told us, though the full splendour of the truth is veiled. To faith and prayer great things disclose themselves from the darkness. Words long familiar open into new meanings. What has been called but a clear sickle of pale and trembling light is beheld at last “rounded, perfect, apparent—queen of all the sky.” And the very thought which appalled us may yield in the end strength and peace.

It is true we do not choose the hour of bereavement. But it is chosen. We should never think the time had come, and how darkly wise must ever seem the love that ordains it! But in the lonely and solemn moment when earthly hopes perish, the voice speaks, *It is I; be not afraid.*

The Lord Jesus has come to call His redeemed to Himself. When death is over, He receives the obedient spirit. The ministration of our love is ended; we cannot keep the departing soul company. But it is not alone. Christ is there to bring His own to the place prepared in Paradise.

The home to which He brings them is prepared, and by His own hands. To die is not to pass into the wide, grey, lampless, deep, unpeopled darkness. When a child is born on earth into a loving home, how much thought and affection have gone into preparation for its coming! It enters feeble and ignorant into an unknown world. But for every want there has been already a provident care. So, but far more abundantly, is there a preparation made for us in the other life. They are waiting for us there. We are ushered with the divinest tenderness into our own place. What welcome is too rapturous for the soul that has trusted Christ, and has been carried to God in His arms?

Ever since Jesus left this world, He has been preparing and receiving in the other. That He should be there is in itself a preparation. In the Father's house there are many mansions: His

presence makes them homes. Also He has been preparing by receiving. Long as that sweet and solemn call has sounded, *Gather my saints together unto me*, holy souls have obeyed it, and now who of us is so poor as to have none to welcome in the other life? There, as here, the Master says, *Love one another*. In the days of His flesh, overcome by loving pity, He brought one back and *delivered him to his mother*. He knows His sheep by the old names and the new, and to Him every death is a birth, and every parting on earth an endless embrace in heaven. The innumerable company of angels who rejoice in the soul's repentance will triumph in its final victory. In the other world love meets love with no shadow of fear before it. But here also the work is Christ's. What share saints and angels have in the preparing we cannot tell. "*I go to prepare a place for you.*" To be absent from the body is to be at home with the Lord.

Yes; we can do nothing. At the moment when we would fain do everything—when yearning love grows into agony—we are gently bidden back. Not now. Our opportunity was given; whether used well or ill, it has ceased. The passion of grief and pity which shakes the soul

avails not. We are not even to pray for the departed. Does it seem harsh? It is because the care of the cherished soul is too sacred now for any but Christ Himself. Those whom He has taken into His more immediate keeping have everything love can bestow. They must not be any more—even in the least things—dependent upon those who are still in the flesh. Our prayers even they do not ask for; they are in the full possession of all that prayer implored. We learn at last, with a wonder which may grow into praise, that our love was untender, and our care ungentle, and our sympathy imperfect compared with the loving kindness which enfolds them now.

But the love which is the one element they breathe has not forgotten us and our immortal claim on them. The powers the world worships are to be disarmed at length by goodness. Knowledge, when the fulness of the universe becomes luminous, shall vanish away. But love lives on, making homes. Christ says :

All which I took from thee I did but take
Not for thy harms,
But just that thou might'st seek it in my arms
All which thy child's mistake
Fancies as lost I have stored for thee at home
Rise, clasp my hand, and come.

When we see beyond the darkness ; when we know that the soul is at home with Christ ; when we can say, " Well is our treasure laid up for us in eternity," peace has begun. He would not have us ignorant of this.

" A king was sitting with his warriors round the fire in a long, dark barn. It was night, and winter. Suddenly a little bird flew in at the open door, and flew out again at the other. The king spoke, and said : ' This bird is like man in the world ; it flew in from darkness, and out again to darkness, and was not long in the warmth and light.' ' King,' replied the oldest of the warriors, ' even in the dark the bird is not lost, but finds its nest.' "

But why are we left ignorant about so much ? Why is not more of the mystery lightened ? Why is death so terrible in its manner ? And why are we hindered from direct communion with the dead ?

These are questions to which no full answer can be given. But it is possible to see that our business is to live, that God has work for us, even if for the time to come we are only able to keep pace with the wounded. If death were robbed of its terrors—if it were, as it might have

been, the crowning joy of life—how could men go on living, working, waiting? It is good for us that Paradise, according to the deep Eastern saying, should still lie under the shadow of swords.

And if the communion could be resumed, the whole heart would be drawn away from the present life and its duties. Because He means us to abide for a season, the sweet voices are still. Yet He remains, and in Him there is union with those lost awhile. The more truly our fellowship is with the Father and the Son, the more truly is it with them. Who shall say that through Him new currents of covenanting love may not even yet pass between us?

“I know Whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I committed unto Him.” *That which I have committed unto Him.* Who can read the secrets of the Apostle’s soul? How much is coming into the words as these mortal years run out! But we know the end. “Do we sink,” said Carlyle, “in these swamps amidst the dance of dying dreams?” No; we have before us no treacherous morass, no infinite inane, no vague and formless mist, but at the end of a short road the light, the warmth, the love, the welcome of Home.

A PRAYER FOR MIDDLE LIFE

In the midst of the years make known.

HAB. iii. 2.

WHAT we commonly call a revival of religion is the conversion of the young on a large scale. But when youth, with its energies and hopes, is delivered from this present evil world and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son, this is not revival. It is the access of life to life. But when those who have known life—of nature and of the spirit—find it sinking in the midst of the years, to have it restored by the divine breath—this is indeed revival.

For it is in mid-life especially that we are conscious of jaded ardour. We have lost, to begin with, the physical buoyancy of early years. We can no longer say:

“ Whether we lay in the cave or the shed,
Our sleep fell soft on the hardest bed,
Fresh we awoke on the morrow.

All our thoughts and words had scope,
We had health and we had hope,
Toil and labour, but no sorrow."

The spirit, too, is fatigued. We have learned by many repulses the hardness of the battle. In his memorable portrait of Napoleon, Hazlitt speaks of the unconquerable energy that flamed in every part of the theatre of war, that ran to meet danger wherever it showed itself most formidable, of "the strength of purpose and self confidence which constitute the definition of a hero or great man, attempting the utmost that is possible with the utmost of your power, and without the smallest loss of time." In the mood of mid-life this sounds like dreary irony. We have proved our weapons, and their edge has been turned. Our circumstances are narrow, and they will never be expanded. Men have made up their minds about us: they have seen us, measured us, and passed us by. Except they see signs and wonders, they will not believe that we are more than we have seemed to them. Standing in the centre, we see behind a tame and ineffectual life, and before us monotony and decay. The hope of the world is not in us; it is in the young. We accept the fact with various feelings; but we

all are prone to accept it. To some natures it is a misery; they ponder on human need, and their little and slow means of diminishing it, till their thoughts beat upon the brain like an anvil, and they become fierce through hopelessness. Others ignobly acquiesce; they turn to the comforts that are left them, and forget the lofty passion with which they once looked on to life. Others see the ideal in dreams, and let the world go past them.

“The drudging student trims his lamp,
Opens his Plutarch; puts him in the place
Of Roman, Grecian; draws the patched gown close;
Dreams, ‘Thus should I fight, save, rule the world,’
Then smilingly, contentedly sinks back
To the old solitary nothingness.”

In all these cases the man becomes practically a spent force. The best that can be expected is that he will drudge on obscurely and decently till he dies. He will work no deliverance in the earth. His talent has been buried, and will never be dug up. The great conflicts and the great tasks of the world he has finally renounced. He has too early accepted the hasty verdict of his judges, and has forgotten that in the midst of the years there may come revival and a new beginning in answer to that supplication, *In the*

midst of the years make known. His ambition sought a change of circumstances, and, being earthly, was denied.

But why should not the nobler yearning, the diviner passion, take its room? *In the midst of the years make known* is a prayer not for a change of surroundings, but for lordship over them. And this mastery comes to us only in one way. God in Christ must disclose Himself. We must return to the Lord, and receive from Him the deep and vital power we have lost. If we seek Him we shall find Him, and all in Him. He meets us and shows us what we are, and what in Him we may be. More than the vanished splendour of the heavenly vision which quickened our youth comes back to us, and with it the spring returns.

To do more we must be more. To be more we must see more of God. It is the divine Appearing that liberates and reveals the forces of the soul. It breaks the chains which bind the spirit, whatever they may be. To many the deliverance is from intellectual indolence. They have for years learned nothing and forgotten much. To look round on their books is to see that they no longer care to comprehend the difficulties of their times. To preachers this is

fatal. Nor will Christian laymen, as they are called, ever do the work they ought to do for Christ in this country till they are willing to become serious students of the Bible and of theology. A beginning of days to many preachers would be to take possession of some new province of literature, as Robert Hall did when, after sixty, he studied Italian to read Dante; as Arnold did when, two years before his death, he began Sanskrit, pleading that he "was not so old as Cato when he learned Greek." How many weary and starved congregations listen hopelessly to a dejected preacher who will never give them a word, a phrase, or a thought they have not heard hundreds of times. An appearing of God to such a man would send him to his desk and keep him there. Even among those who by conscientious toil keep their service on a high level, many shrink too soon from the effort to face and comprehend the thought and purpose of the new time. They need not subject their hearts to this as to a thing inevitable. Those who have fresh visions of God will never lose their grasp over young minds, or their power to deal with new problems. While the promise of the young should be, and ever will be, hailed with ardent affection, there is something

greater and more beautiful even than that—a spirit revived in the midst of the years—compelling those who judged it and thought themselves done with it to revise their verdict, and entering, though late, into its heritage of power and peace.

For others this making known means the snapping of some chain of habit. Some indulgence, some selfishness, some sin not clearly recognised by conscience, is keeping out the light. Freed from it, the soul enters into the great liberty of a new life. Perhaps it is taught for the first time the secret of Christian love. Nothing but the divine enlargement will ever teach us this. Only the life in God makes us rich and interprets that saying, "All things are yours." The enlarged experience of God's love as we, "being rooted and grounded in love," look into the Father's face and the Saviour's heart, makes us love one another, and to him who loves all things become new.

By this revival we are brought into tune with circumstance. We cease to be rebellious, or chilled, or even resigned. We mourn no more that we have so little, can do so little. We enter into a deep and settled reconciliation with our

surroundings, and so life becomes at last harmonious, and strong, and precious. So precious, as we think of the past and the future, that the prayer is last on our lips as we fall asleep, first in our thoughts as we awake with God—*In the midst of the years make known.* “Christ, gather up my life’s poor hoard !”

THE GIFT OF THE MORNING STAR

And I will give him the morning star.—REV. ii. 28.

OVER the grave of a dead captain of freedom it was said : "Above the changing fortunes of the cause of which he was the leader, he moved as untroubled as the stars in their orbits. He was never elated by success ; never disheartened by temporary disasters and failures. *Of ultimate success he was always certain.*"

Thus was fulfilled the promise made "to him that overcometh and keepeth my works unto the end," *I will give him the morning star.* Those who refuse to do treason to conviction and principle, who will not weakly comply with the fashions about them—receive the morning star. That star is much more than the promise ; it is the earnest of the future light of victory. For those who receive it, the battle in a true sense is past. They are conquerors all the time they fight.

It is this realisation of victory which has distinguished all great leaders and made them what they are. What is it that makes men spiteful, irritated, ungenerous? Nothing but the fear of defeat. Victors are magnanimous; they can afford to be so, and so can he who knows already the triumph of his cause. It may be laid down with certainty that all great leaders have been magnanimous. Sneering, sarcasm, sharp retort, slander—such things have brought men into temporary prominence, but they have never made a name, won a battle, or even permanently advanced a cause. It is the lot of leaders to provoke fierce hatred; to live often under the cloud of almost universal distrust. Their names are at times as “lightning rods for storms to strike on.” Being human, they may be betrayed into occasional bitterness by injustice, or more likely by their clear perception of the awful contrast between the real and the ideal. And they may lawfully know how to puncture wind bags. But one of their sure marks is reverence for man. They never forget that the mass live in a world of mist and shadow. They do not lose their faith in human nature. They believe to the end that when the human soul

can be parted from the "discouraging clouds of confusion," from the tumults and passions of the hour, it is ready to give heed to the voice of eternal truth and justice.

They are patient and undismayed when checks and reverses come. The course of great causes is never wholly smooth; there come years of leanness and apathy, when hope and enthusiasm almost die. Leaders pass away or are "lost" more sadly than by death. Life is short, and the thought that unnerves the weak is, "What if after all we are not on the winning side? What if the tide turns and sweeps away all that we have done, and the future takes a form at variance with our hopes and strivings?" In the midst of such things—dispirited soldiers, triumphant foes, souls despondent at the sight of altering and dying goodness—true leaders draw their strength from regions "where time's far wandering stream has never run." They see beyond the confusions, the depressions, the darkness of the hour. The morning star is in their hearts, and they are delivered from the outwardness of things around them—

"Account as wood, brick, stone this ring
Of the rueful neighbours and forth to Thee!"

There is unity in the lives where this light has been kindled—the unity of a regal purpose. If all the lives that start on a high level of faith and hope maintained the promise of their beginning, redemption would indeed be nigh. But with most it is far otherwise. They may have seen visions and dreamed dreams in their time, but visions and dreams have faded, and the lofty ardour of youth has gone with them. Now they have given over the fight, perchance have deserted to the other camp; at best they remain timid, irresolute, full of hesitations and misgivings. But those with the earnest of the light are undismayed. They are heroically constant. What wonder if men gather round them and follow them! Such leaders have never been more beautifully described than by Matthew Arnold in the well-known but never hackneyed lines:

“ We were weary, and we
Fearful, and we in our march
Fain to drop down and to die.
Still thou turnedst, and still
Beckonedst the trembler, and still
Gavest the weary thy hand.
If, in the paths of the world,
Stones might have wounded thy feet,
Toil or dejection have tried
Thy spirit, of that we saw

Nothing—to us thou wast still
Cheerful and helpful and firm,
Therefore to thee it was given
Many to save with thyself;
And, at the end of thy day,
O faithful shepherd! to come,
Bringing thy sheep in thy hand."

These, as the poet says, bid panic and weariness vanish; these bring back order and courage; these fill up the gaps in the files, strengthen the wavering line, and lead on to the City of God.

For they have been already in it, and have seen its glory and honour. Nothing is more strange and affecting, and yet nothing is more true, than that those who take the most vehement part in the conflicts of this world and the keenest interest in its affairs are nevertheless detached from it. They are all the while sons of the high mother city which is free. It is this which makes them magnanimous, patient, resolute; it is this which makes them willing to leave the struggle before victory is proclaimed, and even when it seems as if the infantry of trust were being repulsed. They have achieved a great liberty. While they live they dwell with God; when they die they depart in peace, because their eyes have seen His salvation.

WHAT IS THE JOY OF OUR LORD?

Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.—MATT. XXV. 21.

WE know what His sorrow was. "How often would I have gathered thy children and ye would not." What was His joy? When in the end He welcomes those who have been faithful to their trust, He says, "Well done enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." His praise has been generously bestowed through the failures of this life, and even in the humblest judgment the redeemed soul ever passed on itself, it has not been without a trembling consciousness of His broader love. Nor have His people—even when they saw Him not—been left without joy, joy unspeakable and full of glory. But He speaks of a joy after death to which they had hitherto been strangers, a joy into which they would enter as into a home, and which would fold itself around them. It was to be

His own joy. Anything He did not share would be nothing to them. How poor the promise would be, "He that overcometh shall inherit all things," if it ended there. The possession of many things leaves the heart empty; how should the possession of all things enrich it? But when it goes on, "And I will be his God, and he shall be my son," the words fall upon the soul like a shower of strength.

What then is that joy which is the last guerdon of the ransomed? He explains it Himself. "I will make thee ruler over many things." It is the joy of ruling. "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne." In these and in many words like them, He answers a deep instinct and craving by imparting the sweet and wonderful secret of His purpose.

It was His own joy in the world. When He leant back upon God and communed with His own heart, He said, "The Father loveth the Son, and *hath given all things into His hand.*" Power is the special gift of love, and He had received it. "Thou sayest that I am a king." For a certain misnamed kingship He did not seek. He would have none of it. When they

sought to make Him a king by force, He departed into a mountain Himself alone. Rank and rule in this world He rejected; He would suffer neither men, nor even His twelve legions of angels, to crown Him on an earthly throne. The only kingdom He cared to rule over was a kingdom of kings, and He gives His subjects the promise of a throne.

This joy of our Lord is reserved in its fulness for the other life. Here His people fight the battle within themselves. With the great simplicity of revelation, St. James tells us the source of all disquiet, from the meanest brawl to world-shaking war. "From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of the lusts that war in your members?" The soul is peaceless till the will rules every other power, and till that will is Christ within. The true kings unto God have known this so well that they have hardly asked for any other dominion. And so they have often for the time been obscure, and apparently without influence. They have been thwarted and enclosed. As McLeod Campbell said of his friend A. J. Scott, "How mysteriously God seemed to be at the same time increasing

his light and withholding from placing it on a candlestick." But our Lord said, "Your time is always ready; my time is not yet come."

Still, His time was to come. He is not unrighteous to forget. The human heart under His own inspiration may reverently say to the Master, "Neither do men light a lamp, and put it under the bushel, but on the stand, and it shineth unto all that are in the house. Even so let *Thy* lights shine before men." There is a just impatience, kindling sometimes to a *saeva indignatio*, when the unworthy are upon the throne. Perhaps the most memorable witness to this is to be found in the pages of Tacitus. In his time brute force seemed to be all that remained. The world was held together only by bands of iron. The meanest, the falsest, and the cruellest sat upon the thrones which should have been filled by the just and the merciful; and so terrible was the issue that it seemed better neither to see nor suffer than to see and suffer such things as befell.

But the true kings for the most part work out their salvation quietly. Earthly ambition so easily takes the form of spiritual desire that to strive for greatness in the kingdom of

God is to lose it. As the mystic Henry Suso has it :

“Speech of heaven from wise men hidden,
Unto children taught ;
Few the words of that great lesson,
Only ‘ I am not.’

“Heart of man, another language
Is thy native speech,
Spoken by a thousand races
All alike in each.

“‘ I am ’—rich or wise or holy,
‘ Thus and thus am I ’ ;
For ‘ I am ’ men strive and labour,
For ‘ I am ’ they die.”

The saints marvel when the kingdom comes to them. “When saw we Thee an hungered, and gave Thee meat?” Yet in this way—the old and perfect way which Christ has taught His own—they arrive at their dominion. The meek *shall* inherit the earth. It must be so. Meekness wears everything else out, and is as meek at last in its triumph as when stripped and dispossessed. There is a magic in gentleness of which even the heathen dreamt when they imagined Osiris going forth to conquer the world, not with chariots and horses, but with music. Love which has not vaunted herself, has not sought her own; love which has

borne all things, believed all things, hoped all things, must in the end inherit all things.

The saints shall reign with Christ and be partakers of His kingly joy. Little as they may dwell on it, the thought passes often through their hearts like a song in the night. For the promise means that one day their light will be all clear; that it will be set on high till its last ray travels to its period; that there will be nothing to limit or obscure its force. They may thus bear patiently whatever hinders it on earth. Like Mr. Fearing, they are never better in all their pilgrimage than when in the Valley of Humiliation. "Here he would lie down, embrace the ground, and kiss the very flowers that grew in this Valley. He would now be up every Morning by break of Day, tracing and walking to and fro in this Valley."

What patience, reverence, and humility should come from this revelation! There is nothing more unchristian than a life-long quarrel with circumstance. That the soul should prosper is its Redeemer's chief care, and He knows where it may prosper best. He will set the light on a candlestick at a time which cannot be far off, and may be very near. With what

amazement we shall witness His appointments to rulership in the world where there is neither male nor female, rich nor poor, wise nor unwise. In the simple goodness and faith which count for so little in the world's reckoning are the undiscerned signs of the coming glory. The servants of Christ mourn in decaying years how strangely little they have ever done, and they sorrow most of all because they can do no more. And they are about to grasp the sceptre of dominion! They are appointed to a kingdom which has no seeds of dissolution or decay—but which must move with the rest ever nearer to the Sun of suns, till every kingdom is merged in one, and God is all in all.

THE BURDEN OF EGYPT

The burden of Egypt.—ISAIAH xix. 1.

I N the preface to a volume of travel letters by Dr. Liddon his sister says: "Dr. Liddon's interests were always the same. This was nowhere more evident than in Egypt, which had for him extraordinary fascinations, because, as he would frequently explain, the life of the ancient Egyptians all pointed one way; their monuments and their literature alike show that they held the real business of this life to be preparation for death. It was neither on their palaces nor on their public buildings that they lavished their art and their wealth, but on their temples and their tombs. 'What an example for us,' he would often say; 'one that can only fill us with humiliation and shame.'"

That the true business of life is to prepare for death has ever been the belief of all serious, of

all catholic, Christians, from Dr. Liddon to Thomas Carlyle's peasant father "impressively pronouncing the words, 'Prepare us for these solemn events, death, judgment, and eternity.'" It may have receded in the thin and washy versions of Christianity current in our day, but it must return. For life is a judgment as well as a discipline, and unless the moral nerve has been cauterised to death, the soul must seek the way by which alone the offended justice of God can be met in peace. And desire as well as fear, the desire of the soul created for God and restless till it finds Him, can be contented only with the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. The faith that joins us to Christ and restores us to God must be maintained by steady preparation—the preparation of prayer, labour, and self-scrutiny—for the supreme hour when, in presence of the Lord of Truth, the spirit makes its answer.

But we are told "other worldliness" has gone out of fashion, that our business is with the rectification of life on earth. Yes ; but that can only be accomplished by souls detached from time, though detained within it. Nothing, said St. Paul, could separate him from the love of Christ ;

neither life nor death, things present nor things to come. *Neque instantia*. And neither did Christ's love separate him from things present. Rather it made him and it makes all in the same case the true servants and rulers of the present.

For this alone delivers us from the bondage of a selfish heart. Once we feel that our treasure is safe with Christ, we can look justly, wisely, and calmly on our social surroundings. We can address ourselves to setting them right, untroubled by personal considerations. Time was when Christians were not unfairly charged with being ardent and imaginative to the pre-millennial advent of Christ, but cold and cautious to every other infringement of the *status quo*; with tearing away the natural muscles and fibres, and replacing them by a patent steel spring called *the glory of God*. Why should it be true any more? Why should we not eagerly give ourselves to social questions, and recognise that Christianity has entered its political period? Why not recognise that Christ's kingdom is to come on earth, and that we have to fight against the demons of avarice and lust and drink? The rich and various spectacle of human life should grow more wonderful and dear to us, if we are

dead and our life is hid with Christ in God. As the deep and beautiful lines of Young have it :

“ The cuckoo seasons sing
The same dull note to such as nothing prize,
But what those seasons from the teeming earth
To doting sense indulge. But nobler minds
Which relish fruit unripened by the sun
Make their days various ; various as the dyes
On the dove's neck which wanton in his rays.
On minds of dove-like innocence possessed,
Or lightened minds that bask in Virtue's beams,
Nothing hangs tedious, nothing old revolves
In that for which they long, for which they live.”

To depreciate or stand aloof from the great tasks of social reform is a real denial of Christ. These questions will never be settled by war. They cannot be settled so long as personal passion and pique—envy, jealousy, and malice—are in the ascendant. They will yield only to those who are content to live and die humble servants of God, yet brave and free citizens.

This readiness will give us the transfigured courage of love. We shall not flinch at the slings and arrows of our foes ; these cannot touch the immortal part. We shall not pander to the vain hopes of those we serve, but tell them plainly that stern limits are set to the efficacy of earthly good ; and that all possessions will but

leave them poorer if they miss salvation. We shall not be dismayed when foes and friends alike turn upon us. The best cause may come to such a pass that all men will seem to forsake it and flee; the rain will descend, the floods come, the winds blow and beat upon the house. But what is built on the rock will stand. The disciple is not greater than his Lord, and it may be, as Heine says, that wherever a lofty soul utters its thoughts there is Golgotha. Even so in the bold and free acceptance of death there is given perfect courage and perfect self-command. Jesus died among legions of peace-breathing angels, and His peace passes to the prepared soul in death. When the cruellest blow falls, when the few human faces that made our inner world are fading, the hope rooted in Christ remains, for we know they depart to shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of the Father. The affections are no more nerves to suffer with when in Christ, bereavement and death are met with the fulness of willing love.

And so we are saved from despair. In this war victories often seem worse than defeats. The change we have worked and suffered for comes, but not as we hoped it would. Its very

coming raises new difficulties, new problems to solve. Material good is won only to demoralise. One measure of reform necessitates another and yet another, and while the dreams widen and the desires expand, the strength fails and the years shorten. What then? It is through these partial and broken triumphs that we catch glimpses of the eternal order. All earthly dreams crumble to pieces. One by one "down go tower and temple down" of the ancient city of our thoughts and hopes. Then the sky is clear, and we see palaces and altars rise on the ruins, and know that thus Humanity is made ready for wedding her true Lover; thus is prepared the New Jerusalem as a Bride adorned for her Husband.

“IT IS OF THE LORD’S MERCIES”

It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed.

LAM. iii. 22.

NO text expresses more perfectly the old Puritan temper and faith than this: “It is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed.” The Christianity it uttered was not completely normal, but there were elements in it for lack of which our modern religion is suffering.

To begin with, the old Puritanism was profoundly aware of the tragical element in life, and met it fairly. That element remains with us, and science has brought it nearer. Whose heart has not fluttered at the sight of a telegram? The skies above us are charged with possibilities of tempest and destruction. We hold nothing securely. We walk continually by the edge of a precipice. We go to sleep knowing that next day may bring us news which will darken all the

days to come. "It is of the Lord's mercies" if it does not. These bolts strike us oftenest from an unclouded heaven, and make the very earth reel under our feet. So often is the lesson read that fear looks out even from innocent blue eyes of hope, and a nameless sudden chill falls on the most rapturous hours. How are we to master this? Not by the murder of nobler thought and sweeter instinct, not by the substitution of casual lusts for faithful affection, not through trampled and conquered love, but through victorious faith. There is enough in life to make us sober—to moderate moods of triumph, to teach us that there are worse things than death. The Puritans knew this; and they knew also that, strange as it seems, the Christian may realise peacefully that the things which are seen are temporal. Not by loving less, but by loving the creature in the Creator, are we fortified to take the worst that time can do, saying, "The things which are unseen are eternal." What came into this sphere of time may vanish from it; what we loved in God abides in God, and we go to find it. Thus after "the wreckful siege of battering days" there often comes over the worn and furrowed face that blessed light of childhood. with its sure hope of

happiness. Thus we may rise to say, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and there is none on earth that I desire beside Thee," and know the secret of loving God with heart and soul and strength and mind. Thus we may learn not merely to bless God for the stroke averted, but to bless Him in the moment of its falling; to arise at midnight and give thanks because of His righteous judgments.

Puritan also and Christian is the temper that blesses God for bare life—that is thankful for anything. Beautiful are those frugal lights that shine on obscure and pious lives. "We've haen a pleasantness in oor lives," said Jess, in "A Window in Thrums," "that comes to few. I ken naeboddy 'at's haen sae muckle happiness one wy or another." "The Lord has gien this house sae muckle 'at to pray for mair looks like no bein' thankful for what we've got." And who will forget Jess's dying words to the minister: "Na, my thochts is no nane set on the vanities o' the world, noo. I kenna hoo I could ever hae haen such an ambition to hae thae stuff-bottomed chairs." Martha, in "A Humble Romance," is of the same dear sisterhood. "Just to think that I shall have a front winder to sit to! I wish

mother could ha' lived to see it. Mebbe you kinder wonder at it, Mrs. Peter's—you've allers had front winders; but you haven't any idea what a great thing it seems to me. It kinder makes me feel younger. Jest see that green spot out thar; it's been greener than the rest of the yard all the spring, and now thar's lots of dandelions blowed out on it, and some clover. To think I'm going to hev a front winder!" The demand for justice, and especially for a full and joyous life, to the toiling multitude, was not thoroughly understood by Puritanism. But how much more Christian was its temper than the cowardly impatience of hardship, the restless craving for pleasure, the longing to escape from work, of which we now hear so much. There is something as dangerous as it is ignoble in the impatience of the slightest interruption of personal comfort which characterises the sated and pampered few, and the hungry materialism of the many. Stern though their creed was, they lived nearer God and happiness,

"Who tarried here,
Mere desert land sojourners,
They dared not dream of mirth or rest,
God's humble lesson-learners.

"The temple's sacred perfume round
Their week-day robes was clinging,
Their mirth was but the golden bells
On priestly garments ringing."

This Puritan motto gives us the true viewpoint from which to apprehend the Cross. That form of Calvinism which sought to destroy humanism, and to treat the Church as a body whose members have no relation with the world, is dead. The doctrine that human nature was demonic, a doctrine which practically denied any lingering trace of the image of God, is no longer held anywhere. But modern teaching has largely swung to the opposite extreme. Men hear so much about God's need of them, that they do not think as they should about their need of Him. People sit listlessly while the preacher tells of the divine craving, but do not understand the terrible love of God:

"So great that saints dread more
To be forgiven than sinners do to die,"

and they never will understand it till they cannot so much as lift up their eyes unto heaven—till they feel that it is of the Lord's mercies they are not consumed. As McLeod Campbell has said, this is a doctrine for all. "The true protection from any limiting distinctions as to the

forgiveness which we receive, and which we are to cherish and to manifest, is seeing ourselves in that light of truth in which we thankfully and with the utmost self-abasement *cease* from the hopeless task of weighing our own unworthiness by putting sins and ignorance into one scale, the ideal of good in the other, in order to raise our hope of mercy by taking from the demerit of our sin, and bless God that, taking the lowest ground, and as being the chief of sinners, we still find all our utmost need met in the forgiveness which the Gospel reveals." The beginning and the end of Christianity is the death of pride.

"Happy they who at Thy side,
Thou Child of Nazareth,
Have learnt to give their struggling pride
Into Thy hands to death;
If thus indeed we lay us low,
Thou wilt exalt us o'er the foe,
And let the exaltation be
That we are lost in Thee."

“NOR CRYING”

Nor crying.—REV. xi. 4.

IF it were true that Christianity is concentrating itself among the poor, there would be nothing in the fact to disconcert believers. It would simply bring to pass many sayings of its Founder and His apostles. But if it is threatened there by a gospel of material blessedness—such as socialism is often taken for—the victory will go to the evangel which makes an end of crying. Remorse and grief, the results of sin and death, are the arch-foes of happiness.

Mere vulgar socialism—that which is represented in such books as “Looking Backwards”—answers the problem by calling sin atavism, and putting off death to the age of ninety. With such solutions it is natural that its exponents should barely glance at the difficulties. What they really confront and profess to cure

is grumbling. In the ideal City of Health, which is their substitute for the New Jerusalem, no one is hungry, thirsty, sick, or busy. The citizen can escape from weariness to "the largest programme of music ever seen." His ailments are speedily ended by a doctor who knows his constitution. There are no "poor doctors;" every one is skilled; and all must report to a "medical bureau." All work ceases at forty-five. And the end of it is that there is "actually nothing which our people take more interest in than the perfection of the catering and cooking done for them." Sin has ceased to exist; it is viewed as atavism, a hereditary disease to be cured; and grief has gone with it, for after a man has dined in comfort ninety years he has had enough of the world, and his companions have had enough of him.

More serious and noble unbelievers have tried to find a cure for remorse by doing homage to Nemesis. It is a stimulant and a consolation for them to think of sin as a debt which can be paid, and the payment of which, patiently achieved, at last appeases their creditor. As Lord Acton has said, many Christians even believe this. They think that the line, "The

mills of God grind slowly, but they grind exceeding small," is an ancient observation sanctioned by religion, while the words once spoken at Salerno, "I have loved righteousness and hated iniquity, therefore I die in exile," were the last cry of a baffled and despairing fanatic. For death they have only palliatives. In the "New Republic" it is proposed to have in the future metropolis of the race a circular domed temple blind and blank. It is to receive in small separate gasometers the bodies of the dead turned into gas. Round the dark walls are to be separate shrines, with a separate gas-jet to each. After death and the rest, the man or woman who feels most bitterly the loss of the loved one should repair to the temple, light the gas-jet, and pass, with what thoughts may be, a brief vigil before it till it flickers away for ever. "And above there should hang one rude iron lamp, always burning, casting a pale glare upward upon the darkness. This would be the common lamp of the poor, for whose loss in dying no man felt bereavement, or whom no one, at any rate, could find time to say good-bye to." The proper corollary is the affections should be allowed quietly to sink down to tem-

perate, that the heart should be kept cool, lest the sorrow of bereavement should be too keen. In other words, we should count nothing worth crying for. The dead should be calmly resigned to the cold and unrestoring gulf of passionless necessity. Christianity, on the other hand, teaches us not to dread the sweet skill and the sharp pains of loving much. That Divine-Human heart, "in whose affections none were crowded or jostled," loved some above the rest. At the grave of Lazarus, shaken with the vehemence of love and grief, Jesus wept, and the sorrow became the Christ.

Christianity not only faces our true foes, but it faces them in a divine strength. It hopes in Him who absolves the sinner and raises the dead. It confesses that in all nature there is no healing. Nothing which man possesses or can achieve will meet his bitterest need. But—God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. No conviction is more profoundly rooted in the human heart than this—that no man can redeem himself or his brother—that redemption is a divine work. There is force enough in the world, said James Hinton, to regenerate the world if only it were rightly directed. In

that *if* there is much virtue. It is more force that is lacking—the force to direct. But of that divine force every believer is aware from the beginning. He hopes not in parliaments, or political economists, or himself. "After our subtlest analysis of the mental powers, we must still say that our highest thoughts and our best deeds are all given to us." "The drawing of lots is dark, but the child was sent to me; there's dealings with us—there's dealings."

Christianity offers an *instant* supply of the deepest needs. The author of "Looking Backwards" puts the realisation of the ideal social state fifty years ahead, and one of his sympathetic critics thinks that seventy-five centuries would be a more reasonable estimate. Our reformers, if they are honest, must confess that when the serious passion for juster laws fully takes possession of a man, he himself can have little to hope from their enactment. Great things are to be done for workers—when a Liberal Parliament is elected, when the Irish question is settled, when the Whigs are got rid of, when parliamentary representatives are paid—and so one barrier rises after another, and hope deferred makes the heart sick.

Now is the day of salvation.

That is the distinctively Christian message. The soul roused to seek its true liberty cannot wait. It is not asked to wait. *Now*—amid the old grey surroundings—while all that is of time keeps unaltered, the past is dropt and gone. The dead are no more irreclaimable, but present. The soul of a sudden finds itself at Mount Zion, in the heavenly Jerusalem, with an innumerable company of angels and the general assembly and church of the firstborn. "Ye are come" to these, said one to the companions who stood with him downcast amidst the ruin of the visible order. Great things have been done for poor and lonely toilers when they can stand up and sing, in words quick with love and trust:

"Jesus, my Lord, I know His name,
His name is all my boast;
Nor will He put my soul to shame,
Nor let my hope be lost.

* * * *

"Then will He own my worthless name
Before His Father's face,
And in the New Jerusalem
Appoint my soul a place."

For such the future is already present. The thin rent curtain has been drawn aside. The

soul is with Him in whom it lived and overcame and died, and with the dear ones who sun themselves in His face. No more sentenced to wait through bitter and thirsty years for an unsatisfying good, it sees open in the valley of Achor a door of fair promise and boundless hope.

ST. PAUL'S VIEW OF SACRIFICE

Though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.—I COR. xiii. 3.

IT has been pointed out that St. Paul, when he wrote, *Though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing*, may have had an actual historical incident in view. A story is told by classical writers of an embassy sent to Augustus by Porus, an Indian king, attached to which was a fanatic who, under circumstances of which we have no information, publicly burnt himself at Athens. His tomb, according to Plutarch, was one of the sights of the city. It bore the inscription "Zarmanochegas, the Indian from Bargaosa, who after the fashion of his Indian forefathers made himself immortal, died here." "Now, Zarmanochegas is evidently the same word as Iramana-Karja, which means 'teacher of the ascetics,' and shows that its owner was

not Brahman, but Buddhist; while Barygoza may be taken as identical with Barygoza, a city in which we know Buddhism flourished at the beginning of the Christian era. What more likely than that Paul, whose eye had been attracted by the inscription, 'To the Unknown God,' should have seen this also, and should have heard the story of the strange self-immolation which was still fresh in the minds of men?"

Mr. Beard describes this as the only meeting-point that exists between Buddhism and Christianity, and it may well be that this exit by the gate of fire drew the thoughts of St. Paul. For the practice of suicide was hardly Greek, and took easier ways than through the flames. The death would thus be a wonder—a wonder apparently heroic, but on deeper reflection alike vain and cowardly.

St. Paul's devotion was unbroken; but he testified that sacrifice by itself is nothing. The sacrifice which is the imitation of Christ must be moved by love, and must seek a worthy end. *Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldst not*, applies to all such purposeless and theatrical displays. The great oblation which is our example as well as our propitiation, and his own daily dying, were of another order.

Why did Christ die? There is no difficulty in saying that He died for love. In this all agree. But was He the victim of His own affection? Did He begin His ministry hoping to convert His nation, and holding on through unlooked-for checks and disappointments till all the horizon was black, and He saw no honourable way out of it but dying? No; He was Victim indeed, but he was also Priest. All His life was love and in a sense all of it was pain, but nothing took Him unawares, and He foresaw and meant His death. He was fastened to His cross not by nails, but by ancient prophecies and mysteries of love. In dying He spoiled Death, and made a show of him triumphing openly. Had He been but victim, even the faithfulest lips might tremble to give God His crown-name. He died in witness to the dread necessity of expiation; He offered himself immaculate to God as the full oblation and sacrifice for the sin of the world.

But the offering was of charity. Trace the life-giving river to its fountain-head, and we see it spring in everlasting love. Though the deep human heart's first demand even in its fall is for justice; though St. Paul declares that he is not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, because first of

all it reveals the righteousness of God from faith to faith, yet it is the love of the Atonement that draws us out of the dreary years of routine and of sin, and gives us power to become true sons of God.

And now that we have fairly entered the political period of Christianity, whose watchword is charity, it is well to consider what self-sacrifice really is. It is not lavish giving. Though, says the Apostle, I give all my goods to feed the poor, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing. A man whose whole income appears in subscription lists may or may not be charitable. In the war between the haves and the have-nots many will give lavishly to put off the day of reckoning. But what is surrendered from fear is not charity. Others, again, give from a sense of duty; they understand that they ought to part with one-tenth of their incomes; perhaps there is a lurking thought somewhere that God may prosper their business if they give Him some small share, but neither duty nor calculation is love. We believe there are in the Christian Church, that to-day looks so dead, so comfortable, so utterly deaf to its call, many thousand souls of the true Israel seeking to be led from the house of bondage.

But their Moses will not put giving first. Love is *first*—that love which can be learned nowhere but at the cross. The Gospel is the reinstatement of love, and love is maintained only by the sacrifice. Philanthropy is very popular, but it is only an outer energy, and it has been well said that a virtue which is fashionable is next door to being out of fashion. Love is the condition of the Christian disentanglement.

Neither is voluntary suffering the true self-sacrifice. Love will find the way to its own expression. There will be no need to seek occasions of sacrifice. If we but look where next to plant our foot, we shall in due time discover all the length and all the winding of the way.

We shall not need to imitate the Roman Catholic preacher, each of whose brilliant sermons was followed by severe self-flagellation; who would beg his confessor to spit in his face, to load him with humiliating epithets, to treat him like some vile and unclean animal unworthy of being touched. There has hardly ever been a time when moral courage was more rare. There was never more need of men who will

"Take open, actual part
With right, maintain
Pure truth
Vexed always, wounded oft."

We find leaders of the Christian Churches excusing themselves from touching the vital problems of theology and society; silent when they see wrong and falsehood; cynical critics of those who dare; giving themselves as tools to the dominant party; condoning the treachery of their own partisans. Let us but hear again the voices that of old drew men to leave all and follow, and we, too, will arise and depart. Noble causes are languishing, public lying on the great scale is corrupting the heart of politics, enormous wrongs are being perpetuated in the face of men who knew the truth, but have waited for a convenient season till the man is dead within them.

We shall thus come to understand the life of St. Paul in its sweetness, in its greatness, in its pain—the life of constant suffering and constant triumph, the life that ever heard and never left unheeded the call to bonds and afflictions, the life that did not hurry to useless pains and unasked renunciations, the life that loved and was loved back, the life of a surrender that smoked day and

night like the perfumes on the altar. And when all the years are full, when much has been attained, accomplished, foregone, we shall hear the last solemn call, *My son, give me thine heart* and go forth to our creating, redeeming, sanctifying God, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven, and to Jesus.

For, once more, pain and sacrifice have their term. They that love righteousness and hate iniquity may indeed die in exile, but they are none the less anointed with the oil of gladness above their fellows. They are the partakers and the heirs of the divine joy. Sorrow came with sin, and departs with sin. The idea of the perpetuation of sacrifice is purely pagan. The expression of love is not self-sacrifice, but love and all eternity will be its utterance. Forsaken here to the outward eye for a small moment, the true and brave shall be gathered with great mercies and to everlasting kindness; God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and "plunge grief into the nethermost fires, therein to be consumed."

THE SAINT'S PLEA FOR INTERCESSION

Pray for us; for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly. But I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.—HEB. xiii. 18.

INTERCESSORS — unknown intercessors — are, it may well be, the true rulers of the world. Vaster even than the mystery of personal supplication is that of intercession. For when we plead for ourselves, our will goes with the plea; we ask God to help us in what we desire ourselves. When we intercede it is for those who know not that we pray, who if they did might scorn us, whose purpose and whose way may be directly contrary to our asking. Yet the prodigal son, the daughter wild and wicked and far gone down to hell, are often prayed for in an agony, earnestly, and yield with wonder to a strange constraint.

Here a saint asks to be prayed for, and the reason he gives is noteworthy. He does not say, "Pray for us ; for we are tried and in peril, and our faith fails." His faith was of them that believe to the saving of the soul, his courage high and unshaken ; he had the answer of a good conscience towards God and man. "We are persuaded that we have a good conscience, desiring in all things to conduct ourselves well." He asked to be prayed for because he knew his purpose was pure, and he wished to behold again the faces of his friends.

I. We may say that the saints are never out of peril. A good thing has been committed to them, which they have to keep against all assault till they bring it to the Lord's house at Jerusalem. They have all eyes upon them to mark a stumble. The road is narrow, and on either side are deep descents. They are beset by enemies, one watchful foe above the rest. It is in the noon-day of their joy and attainment that they have most reason to fear. "Pray for us."

II. Here, however, the thought rather is, We have a claim. Help us ; we are doing our best. We spread all our sails for a wind of God ; we are willing to be borne before it. Stir up for us

the succours of grace. Let the breeze rise and take us where we fain would be.

III. "That they without us should not be made perfect." Is there some suggestion of this? In the Church of Christ we offend if we say of the humblest believer, "I have no need of thee." We need on every side, because we are low-minded and low-thoughted, and our eyes cleave to the dust—the dark dust of sorrow, if not the glittering dust of vanity. What if God does not mean that we shall reach the highest unless we use all the forces He has put within our reach? Have we not despised them? What have we done to secure an interest in the prayers of poor saints? How often, let us think, are our names named at night before the throne of grace? If they are little mentioned it is because we have not sought, because we have even despised the intercession that might have been ours. The crowning grace may be still denied to a great saint because he has not begged for prayers. How rich the Church might have been for that life if some faults had been absent, if some graces had been added! What is the secret? We may trace it here.

IV. "But I beseech you the rather to do this,

that I may be restored to you the sooner." Here is prayer for what is called temporal good. In all spheres prayer is power, and the reason why it does not always prevail simply is the wiser love of God. But this man had the Spirit of God ; he was wise and loving also ; and so God let him have his way. We, too, have our way among the things of the world, if we have "a good conscience, desiring in all things to conduct ourselves well." God is "sorry for our childishness ;" does not willingly keep from us the toys we set our hearts on ; would let us have them if it were safe for us. Why have I not succeeded ? Because success would have turned my head. Why am I not rich ? Because riches would have led me into temptation I had no strength to resist. So all our days we are minished and brought low ; we cannot tell why ; and yet the reason is plain to others and plain to God.

But some men and women hardly ever ask anything without receiving it. The promises all come true to them in the largest sense without check or limit, because they have not used or coveted the great gifts of God for themselves, because they have found their treasure and desires in Christ.

SUGGESTIONS TOWARDS A NEW KIND OF ECONOMY

Be content with your wages.—LUKE iii. 14.

THE best result of a time of depression is that it preaches to purpose on the text that a man's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses. Plain living and high thinking go well together when sordid care is once removed. He is therefore a benefactor who shows men how they may live on little—how they may put their little store to the best use, nor be disturbed by cravings after luxuries which can never be lawfully theirs. We suggest that in these times men who desire to be true to themselves, and so false to none, should accustom themselves to make a small measure of affection, recognition, present success, and reward go so far as to suffice them.

This is a time when it is quite certain we have not reached the summit of our striving, but when it seems to almost every one that we are very near it. Hence an unhealthy, feverish impatience. In slower days men took duties for theirs and left results to God. It is not easy to do so now. Duties have been done long enough; causes have been pleaded; mountains have been scaled; and it is for us now to enter into fruition.

But the times and the seasons are still in the power of the Father, and with Him it is better we should leave them. Many causes have been sharply retarded because their leaders committed themselves to chronological prophecies. Three years—and then cometh harvest—said the man of the golden mouth; and, because of that, fifty years have come and gone, and the harvest is still unreaped. The mountain climber achieves one height to find another far above him. On the very verge of attainment some undreamt-of foe rises out of the earth, and our hopes are thrown back for years. Work is done poorly, hastily, nervously, and with grudging under these conditions. Let us return to the ways of the

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wiser workman into whose labours we have entered. They toiled on for long and far results. They thankfully accepted every sign and token, however faint, of progress. But they lived on little of such fare, and were stronger and calmer than we, to whom it often seems that summer is at the doors. Instead of always anticipating the end, let us toil on and feel no pang, though it is delayed till we are no more in these streets and beneath these skies.

Again, this is a time of the reconstruction of parties, and that in all spheres. Professor Owen, if you gave him a bone, could construct the whole animal. Once one could almost do the same thing in the realm of mind. Give an opinion, and you could construct the whole fabric of a man's thought. You cannot do so any more. Men find themselves in sympathy up to a certain point, and after that violent antipathies develop. It may seem paradoxical, but it is true, that these are the circumstances in which the most furious and unreasoning party-spirit prevails. The existing parties die very hard, and the doubtful period of reconstruction is the time above all others in which

a man leaves his party at his peril. In the days of individual desertions and stray questionings such as one might be treated with patience and even goodwill, and be credited with the best of motives. But when the very earth seems reeling beneath their feet, men are moved to madness by what promises to increase their difficulties.

It is hard to pay the price of honesty. It is not so much that a true man cares for himself as for his influence and for the cause dear to him. The party has probably given him at least as much as he has given the party. Outside he is accepted as its representative, and its adherents are ready with their "loud huzzas" for everything he says. His comrades, whom he has acted with till they have become a kind of second conscience to him, are estranged—perhaps embittered. Life is hardly long enough for such wrenches as these. But for conscience's sake they must be borne, though influence, reputation, friends, and career should all go. Whenever conscience is dead the grave is dug for all the faculties, however loud and busy they may be. We need this for our life as a nation—men who will not sell the truth,

and with it their own souls, to any party, ecclesiastical, theological, or political.

How is the practice of this economy to be learned? It is a sovereign remedy to remember that we can do with very little happiness of any kind—of this kind among the rest. Arthur Helps has reminded us in one of his finest passages of what men have lived through, and not ignobly or complainingly—“in noisome dungeons, in studied tortures, in abject and shifting poverty, after consummate shame, upon tremendous change of fortune, in the profoundest desolation of mind and soul, in forced companionship with all that is unlovely and uncongenial.” Who are we that we should claim a better fate? In Metastasio’s beautiful image the mind, like water, passes through all states till it is united to what it is ever seeking. Then, have we made the most of the happiness we have? In the remotest and dreariest country, in the longest and darkest and chilliest day, there is something gladdening for us under the roof of home—something capable of more ministry than we have ever sought from it. And in all spheres wise men have surrendered the little future for the great future. They

have remembered that humanity is always correcting its judgments — like Wordsworth, who was not dismayed by Jeffrey's censure, and has been justified. "Each has his reward; the one the laughter of drawing-rooms, the applause of the crowd, the other a succeeding age, the fond enthusiasm of secret students, the lonely rapture of lonely minds."

But consider Christ and His chosen vessel St. Paul. Both most dearly prized recognition; both thanked God and took courage at every token of cheer; both experienced the bitterest secrets of solitude. Through long tracts the life of Christ flowed on like the Nile, uncheered by the refreshment of tributary streams, to the lonely and awful end. St. Paul had no one to stand by him in an experience after which a man is never the same. Both deliberately provoked the violence of the forces by which their lives ended. Yet how much they made of the smallest token of affection; with what a wealth of promise and benediction our Lord welcomed kindness to Himself and others like Him when He said, *He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward.*

If duty is to be done steadily, calmly, and

faithfully in our days, these are the examples that must guide us. As for our own recognition, it should be sufficient to say :

“As He pronounces lastly on each deed,
Of so much fame in heaven expect thy meed.”

As for what is much more—the cause of truth and justice—let us have all the more confidence in the end, if we must have less in the way. The appointed end is sure; though the time and track of progress may be and will be at variance with our hopes and dreams. Jesus has yet many things to say to us; we could not bear them now.

THIS WORD "YET ONCE MORE"

This word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing.—HEB. xii. 27.

NO book of the New Testament is more "modern" than the Epistle to the Hebrews, none lies closer to the heart of the generation, or throbs with a deeper assent to its consciousness of change and its desire for the unchangeable. To the writer and the readers of the Epistle the changes looming on the Church and the world were so vast and awful that the vicissitudes of their own lives were lessened by their side. *We* are more keenly conscious of the blows of circumstances as they affect ourselves. We look back with yearning on a life like Wordsworth's, of whom it has been said that his bereavements were "thinly scattered clouds in a 'great sea of blue,' seasons of mourning here and there among years which never lost their hold on peace, which knew no shame and

no remorse, no desolation and no fear, whose days were never long with weariness nor their nights broken at the touch of woe." To us this word "Yet once more" signifieth the removing, but it is the removing of our own treasure and joy that strikes us with most piercing force. And yet we know that the foundations of our society and of our Church systems have been made to tremble.

"The Hebrews" for whom the divine words were written, knew what comes to man as time runs out. They had experienced the steady, inevitable invasion of change in themselves and round them. It had even brought them insolence and violence, which they had borne well. But they were called on to face a worse trial—the ruin and overthrow of what God had built. They had to meet the death struggle of Judæa against Rome, the sweeping away of the sacred ritual of the temple, the burning of the holy and beautiful house with fire, the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place. In the midst of this what wonder that faith trembled with the trembling order? What wonder that despair assailed and even took possession of the soul? What wonder that men asked in terror whether God's promise

was broken—whether after all He was loving unto Israel—unto such as were of a clean heart?

We cannot think that those are right who find the society to whom the letter was addressed in Jerusalem, or in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem. Without touching on the other arguments which seem decisive against this view, it is sufficient to say that the anguish and dismay the Apostle sets himself to soothe—and which he so well comprehended—was not as of those conversant with the actual worship of the temple. The writer and his readers were familiar only with the ideal. For them the doomed temple rose in a holier day; her priests fulfilled the divine idea in their appointment; the services were what God meant them to be, and had never been profaned by the irreverence, the selfishness, and the dishonesty of man. What poor comfort might have come from the knowledge of the conflicts between Pharisees and Sadducees, of the buying and selling of the high priesthood, of the corruption of the ministers of the sanctuary, they never had. They did not know how the thought of God had been marred. What filled them with terror and distress almost approaching to despair was that

the ancient pledge of God's nearness to Israel had been done away.

There is one healing, and one only, for all hearts hurt by change. It is that God has done it. The consolation is administered here in a strange and daring fashion. Not content with proving that in the ascended Christ the Church possesses all, and more than all, that has been lost in the disappearance of the ritual of the old covenant, for

"In Him the shadows of the law
Are all fulfilled and now withdraw,"

the Apostle affirms that of this change God is the author. And if it seem incredible that He should thus shake His own temple, the Apostle answers the doubt by saying that He will yet shake His own heavens. The shadow that lay full on the things of time is projected on eternity. "Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven." Once more only will He move the earth and the heaven. By a change which is not the culmination of the processes at work under our eyes, He will remove all that can pass away, Then the things that cannot be shaken—the eternal substance, be it what it may, of the temporal—will remain, and with it they who have

not drawn back, and He, the Unchangeable, ruling amidst the immovable. But before that, change must crowd on change, and the Son of Man appear. For the awe-struck hearers of the Epistle forgotten words about earth and heaven perishing, waxing old, folded up, and changed were revived. It would calm them to see the way of change traced, its frontiers enlarged and yet limited, and its empire put securely in His hands who was bringing in the world over which no change can pass.

Deep as is the silence about the Advent which has fallen upon many pulpits, the thought cannot long lose its place in believing minds. We have not before us a hopeless and endless mutation. There is death to come, but there is something besides death.

"I would think, Perhaps some night
When new things happen, a meteor ball
May slip through the sky in a line of light,
And earth breathe hard and landmarks fall,
And my waves no longer champ nor chafe."

In other words, we become masters and lords of change when we measure its circle to the outermost rim. We shall die; we shall know the trembling of earth and heaven, *and after the*

second veil the tabernacle which is called the holiest of all.

"This word Yet once more" does not now overcome us. We can face "the horrors of the last." For others the warning may be fulfilled:

"All that now delights thee from the day,
On which it should be touched shall melt and pass away."

For them disillusionment may come on disillusionment, and regret follow regret. We have our place in the world that can never crumble into dust. The kingdom which cannot be moved is about us now. It glimmers through the show of things. We have been translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son, and the importunate and ever-shifting objects of sense do not blind us to its glories. It is written—and we know it—that even here and now we are come to the living God, His city, His angels, and His people, to Jesus, the Mediator of a fresh covenant, and the blood of sprinkling which speaketh better than Abel. Nay, the visible shrinks and pales for the enrichment of the invisible, and the departed are no more silent at our feet, but singing overhead. But ere we inherit all things this mortal must put on immortality, and the thin veil through which

shines the light of the seven lamps of fire must be taken away.

Before that veil we wait with reverence and a solemn heart. "This word, Yet once more," signifieth the shaking of earth and heaven. It becomes us to look for the signs and wonders of the Advent with hope and awe, in humble diligence and devoted surrender, as those "whose one object and whose one business is to think of pleasing God."

THE LIGHT OVER THE LAW

To declare, I say, at this time His righteousness.—ROM. iii. 26.

THE modern religious mind shrinks from the legal aspect of the gospel, as if it were untender, harsh, and cold. It neglects the Epistles and finds the heart of revelation in the story of Christ—not knowing that the writings of the apostles are a gospel within the gospel, full of sweetness and sympathy, and veiling more than the Gospels do the severity of God. Even when the apostles deal with the righteousness of God, they set forth its justifying power even more fully than its everlasting claims. If we understand them truly, we shall see that they thus give its consummate glory to the divine love, and that they meet those needs of the human soul that can never disappear and can never long be overlaid. It has been said that the pure glory over the mercy-seat derives its unearthly radiance from its

shining not over a bed of flowers, but over the Ark that holds the Law printed on the stones of Sinai. The real answer to the questionings of those outside, and the restlessness and misery of those within, is that in the way of salvation "all's love and all's law."

In the first place, it is never to be forgotten that righteousness, not love, is the primary thought. How deep is the significance of St. Paul's pride in the gospel. It was the power of God, because it revealed the righteousness of God. Those on whose ears the proclamation struck needed, above all things, to know that the God above them was not capricious and cruel. Browning puts this thought in his "Caliban upon Setebos":

"He doeth His worst in this our life,
Giving just respite lest we die through pain,
Saving last pain for worst—with which an end.
Meanwhile the best way to escape His ire
Is not to seem too happy."

Unbelief in our own day seems to be passing into a phase of paganism. This is the creed of Mr. Hardy's great book "Tess." It is a passionate arraignment of the powers that rule. "The President of the Immortals had finished his sport with Tess." This is not the judg-

ment of a superficial thinker; the creed of superficiality is an unchristian optimism. The sorrows of the universe are aggravated rather than healed by the proclamation of a love that does nothing. To look on the world closely, if we do not look at it in the light of the saving purpose, is to despair. Newman in his *Apologia* has but echoed the thought of Pascal when he speaks of "the disappointments of life, the defeat of good, the success of evil, physical pain, mental anguish, the prevalence and intensity of sin, the pervading idolatries, the corruptions, the dreary, hopeless irreligion, that condition of the whole race so fearfully yet so exactly described in the apostle's words, 'having no hope and without God in the world.'" All this is indeed a vision to dizzy and appal. What counterpart is great and grave enough for the tremendous disaster of the world? There is, there can be but one. It is the Cross of Christ—at once the announcement and the assurance of the righteousness and the love of God. "A God all mercy were a God unjust." The universe, we instinctively feel, is too far out of gear for forgiveness to be easy. God must be just

while He forgives—and He is just when He is the justifier of the man who belongs to faith in Jesus. Who is he that condemneth? Let us but know our own guilt and misery, and we care for no pardon which will not give the challenge to the universe. From the Cross it rings forth, and there is no answer. It is Christ that died. The revelation of righteousness is the deepest word of grace.

Next, nothing must be suffered to obscure the transcendent fact of justification. By faith in the crucified Redeemer we pass in one saving moment from guilt to acceptance. That is a moment not to be repeated in daily experience. True, we stumble and are raised, we become defiled and are cleansed anew. But in justification we receive a present and unchangeable pardon. The burden drops by the side of the Lord's cross into the Lord's grave, *and is seen no more*. It is as if we had been crucified, as if the nails had pierced us, as if we had passed through the great waters of *Lama Sabachthani*, as if we had poured out our souls unto death. For these things we did in Him who died under the load of our iniquity.

There are evangelical teachers who bring the

burden out from the sepulchre and try to fasten it again on the justified, who speak as if the only business of the Christian was the struggle with sin. But that struggle goes on in the unforgiven. There are thousands who reject the Christian name and are yet battling day by day against their lower nature. The deep division is between the pardoned and the unpardoned. Sermons are often preached from which it would appear that the only special fact in the life of the Christian is that he may have help from Christ, and pardon from Christ, as he fights on wearily against the evil that overcomes him. This help is not given to the unbeliever; his sins, however, are counted less heinous than those of the believing man. No wonder that there should be such a lack of brightness and buoyancy in the Christian life. There can be no true peace amid the doubtful and dreary reckonings of victory and defeat. Christians like these have never dropped the load of guilt. They are never sure whether they have indeed left the City of Destruction behind them.

But peace comes when we hear the irreversible sentence of grace, *Neither do I condemn*

thee. When the wayworn Pilgrim spoke this to the bruised reed He would not break, it seemed a little thing. But the Father had committed all judgment to the Son. The last word had been said. Whatever might be her hap at earthly tribunals, however she might shrink and burn with the stain of her own fault, however time might scorn her, it mattered little; God had justified and eternity smiled welcome. The word spoken that day so gently by the Christ incarnate will be repeated in the far future when He puts down all rule and authority and power—leaving but one throne.

Once more, it is necessary to safeguard the fact that to the last all our hope is in the merits of Another. As Mr. Moule puts it in his admirable exposition on the Romans, we pass in justification into a home as well as a refuge—a home whose walls are sprinkled with blood, and which is roofed by the glory of God. We rejoice in hope of that glory; it is our next home and our last. But through these mortal years we must abide in grace. Our sole hope is in the great accomplished Sacrifice. The cardinal doctrine of Christianity is deliverance through a work not our own. Whenever

life languishes, it is because of unbelief in God's Word and in His Work. *Show Thy servants Thy work*—that they may trust it and it only. In other words, it is not in what we do—though that be done by the power of Christ and the Spirit of Christ—that the ground of our justification is found. It is in what Christ has done—in the perfect righteousness wrought out by Him and received by faith alone. It has been noted of humble believers that they have rested with great delight in our Lord's full and finished and perfect sacrifice, satisfaction, and atonement for the sins of the world. And in hours of crisis, when men learn the simplicity to which all things may be reduced, the same experience is nearly universal. In death there is commonly no thought of the labours and sorrows, the joys and pains of the life in Christ. These have vanished, and the soul finds in the simple acceptance of the Lord's merits the answer to all its yearnings and the refuge from all its fears. But in the stress of mid-life there is a temptation to look within. On the one hand this results in perfectionism, on the other in a morbid insistence on the corruption which still lingers in the heart. Nothing is more ac-

cording to God than sadness for sin ; and there are hours when the strongest words are poor to express the misery of the penitent. But taking the New Testament as the norm of the Christian life, we see that it was never meant to be lived after that pattern. Sometimes Christians may have to call themselves " dogs " and " worms " and " reptiles." But they are to have a care about applying such words to others. The apostles never, so far as we can remember, try to deepen the sense of indwelling corruption in their converts. They never once fasten on them names of humiliation. They strike sharply at actual transgression. They give the most solemn warnings to the tempted. But they thank God for the saints. They remember without ceasing their work of faith and labour of love and patience of hope. They steadily recall that the justified are chosen, accepted in the Beloved, sealed with the Holy Spirit, sitting with Christ in heavenly places. This, though they need to be warned against theft and lust, and drunkenness and passion. Even when they sin, the way to recovery is to remember that their roots have pierced through to the living water, that their life is hid with Christ in God. Our

danger is rather that we shrink faithlessly from the language which it becomes the redeemed of the Lord to use, and which they can only use as they are clothed in the robe of His righteousness, and looking to His cross. For in looking to the cross we do not lose sight of our sin. It is graven there. But if we look at our sins we may lose sight of Christ, for His image is not in them. "It is not in our own wounds," says Vinet, "but in the wounds of Jesus that we must put our hands."

THE LIFE OF THE ATONEMENT

HEBREWS xiii.

THE Epistle to the Hebrews is perhaps the greatest theological argument in the world. It gives its unknown writer a place with the very chiefest doctors of the Church, St. Paul and St. John. It attests him not merely as a man of the first intellectual mark, but as one singled out by the inspiring Spirit for the fullest revelations of the truth. Its theme—the Priesthood of Jesus—is already absorbing the thought of this generation, and will still more concern the next. All that the Church militant needs to know of it—and it is much—may be found here. What, then, is the result of it all? Does the long and deep argument, its subtlety, its skill, the infinite art of its manipulation, give us real help in living the life after Christ? The answer is in the last chapter. It describes the life built on the great

Atonement and the Eternal Priesthood. And where is there in all the world a greater piece on conduct—one more serene, lofty, unworldly, affectionate, generous, and brave? We know nothing like it anywhere.

This pure river has flowed from a chain of lakes, one rising above another, and all connected by a stream. The commandment at last emerges, having reached its end of love. The glorious doctrine of Atoning Sacrifice and Intercessory Priesthood has been fashioned completely. There it lies—the white and perfect Word on God's Holy Mountain. What is to flow from it? Something must, for creed is not character; it is only the stuff of which character is made. The last chapter of the Hebrews is the answer to the question.

For the threatened Church whom the apostolic author addressed there was thick darkness outside, but the light in her inner chamber made the darkness invisible. The love of God in the cross, realised in conscious experience, turned all within into a festival. And the first precept is of love—of infinite and changeless charity. For this Christ has died, for this all the labours of grace have been gone through, that we should love.

Nor does the New Testament distinguish narrowly between God's love to us and ours to Him, between love for our neighbour and love for our Lord. We need no mere dogma of the love of God to load our life; we need the love itself, expressed in the Eternal Priesthood, to lie on our cold hearts like a warm hand, changing them to its likeness. *Let love of the brethren continue.*

Next comes the injunction to hospitality—a special grace of the early Church. In her reaction from the extravagance of modern luxury, it may be feared that the Church has largely forgotten the duty of simple but constant hospitality. Wherever there is opportunity it must be exercised. In great cities, where multitudes are homeless, tempted, friendless, no man's house is his own. He should ever be thoughtfully devising plans whereby what he has to give may be used to cheer the craving solitude of his neighbours. The monotony and dreariness of life in remote places is often wonderfully alleviated by the Christian goodness and self-denial of some who set themselves to bring a little sunshine into their neighbours' lot. With such sacrifices God is well pleased. This hospitality must not be

patronising: the Apostle says, *Forget not to show love unto strangers*. And it must be full of sympathy; we ourselves are also in the body, and shall in all probability have a hard struggle ere we are out of it.

Looking round on the little company seen in vision, the writer strenuously urges to Purity. Without this everything was vain. All the other misery in the world is nothing in comparison with the misery wrought by sins against purity. It is the atmosphere of lust that kills the very germ of religion. In those days the apostles had to make head in what seemed a hopeless battle. They had to fight the Church, as well as the world. In the very Church, opinion had sunk so low that the Apostle solemnly leaves fornicators and adulterers to the judgment of God. At last the Church became the guardian of purity. With whatever imperfection, the saving idea was kept alive, and woman knew her friend. Now it looks as if we might have again to fight the battle within the Church; it looks as if in the portentous developments of the future we were likely to have women largely against us. They go singing down the rapids with a light heart. Yet let them admit any change in the Christian law of marriage, and

they will be the victims. Men of the world need no protecting; but what hope is there when women themselves try to put away the shield which Christ flung over them?

Covetousness was the sin which came next. Christians were already rich with the only wealth that enriches all the nature round, and answers the inmost cravings of the soul. Their conversation was to be without covetousness; they were to be content with such things as they had, for they were rich in that promise, *I will in no wise fail thee, neither will I in any wise forsake thee.* How rich! "Such things as ye have," and a promise to cover all needs and all futures. We are very little beyond the Apostolic Church in our thought of covetousness. We still practise the religion of the gold ring. The millionaires in our churches, instead of being subjected to discipline, are usually the dictators. Innumerable persons declare that without the money and patronage of the State the Church and religion of Jesus would perish. The aim to build up a vast fortune remains to the very last the ruling passion of many religious leaders, and in many wills not one penny goes to help one struggling cause of righteousness. We are

assured, too, that the race of great givers is fast dying out.

But the Apostle remembers those who had lived his precepts, who had loved, who had been generously hospitable, whose lives had been without a spot of impurity, who had given to the last of their small means, who had left nothing but the precious treasure of their memory. These were the ministers who had spoken the word of God, and who had died in that faith which made their lives strong. It is to such holy and venerable men, pious, simple, unworldly, that we turn in hours when faith is reeling. Of one such Thomas Carlyle wrote: "They had built a little meeting-house at Ecclefechan, thatched with heath, and chosen them a priest, by name John Johnstone, the priestliest man I ever under any ecclesiastical guise was privileged to look upon. He, in his last years, helped me well with Latin (as he had done many), and otherwise produced me far higher benefit. This peasant union, this little heath-thatched house, this simple evangelist, together constituted properly the church of that district. They were the blessing and the saving of many. On me, too, their pious, heaven-sent influences still rest and live. Let me employ

them well. There was in these days a 'teacher of the people.' He sleeps not far from my father (who built his monument in the Ecclefechan churchyard), the teacher and the taught. 'Blessed,' I again say, 'are the dead that die in the Lord.'"

In thought of their departure the Apostle goes back to the foundations of his faith. He was never far away from them; and it will never be possible for us long to leave them if we are to lead his life. He remembered how the Christ stood stable among the change and wreck of things. He remembered that as Jesus suffered without the gate, His own must go forth to Him without the camp, bearing His reproach. He sees the end at hand and confesses it, declaring that he seeks a city. And he seeks it singing, with the continual sacrifice of praise, for he is sure to find it. He asks to be prayed for, and he invokes the benediction of God on his tried brethren.

This life of love, purity, unworldliness, serenity, could only be lived by prayer. And let us note that the prayer was offered with undoubting confidence for a temporal end. We can see that the writer was one of those children of faith who

lie in Abraham's bosom all the year through. He dwelt evermore in the Lord's house, beholding the beauty of the Lord, and inquiring in His temple. And this through a life outwardly so distracted and claimed that our lives are tranquil beside it. Yet he prayed for specific temporal things; he knew, as De Maistre puts it, that prayer is the dynamic agency of heaven.

It was in this spirit of sober hope that he faced the future. Hope in the Old Testament often means simply a fixed gaze. There comes an hour when all striving is idle, when we must simply look up at the sky, now pitiless, clear, cloudless, but near changing. When our wills lie bowed like reeds in the river, the strongest current will not break them—even the current that would snap opposing bands of iron. We have no make-believe about death. Christianity has nothing to do with illusions. It is always thankful. Faith sees all the hard things of life as good and acceptable and perfect in the Will of God. Through the dullest web of existence it can shoot the shining strands that make it triumphant, peaceful, strong. It knows that there is a soul of sweetness in all the bitter things whereby God prepares His children for their

great Passover. It fortifies itself meanwhile by continually ascending to the Source of Sacrificial Life. *La force est aux sources*—the strength of our cause is at the Fountain-head, and we go there to seek it.

DIANA OF THE EPHESIANS

They cried out, Great is Diana of the Ephesians.—ACTS xix. 34.

THE uproar and clamour echoed in the daily newspapers must recall to some readers the time when a whole city turned into the theatre, and for the space of two hours shouted, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." The vehement, vain adoration of certain fetishes is again the voice of passion and delusion on the edge of sobering change. It is as impossible to perpetuate their power as it was to maintain the glory of the great goddess Diana and the image that fell down from Jupiter. Nor is it uncharitable to say that some of the loudest worshippers well know it.

How did St. Paul regard the tumult? He watched it with the insight of one who comprehended the various life of the motley society round him, as well as with the mind of saintly

love. We may be sure he was not for one moment dismayed. To him was granted what most of us have always to fight for—the discernment of the strong and the true. The heathen raged and the people imagined a vain thing, but he knew that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is no other God but one. The monstrous image—half mummy, half statue—with the turreted crown—the temple with its lofty columns, each one the gift of a king—were powerless against the new truth, which would lay them waste and destroy the last trace of their existence. He could afford to hold his peace, knowing that judgment had gone against them; and that the right would live when the people were known for a gaping rabble, and the idol had been “construed back into moonshine.” His spirit, supported and calm, looked upon it all as from an upper air where such forces had no rule.

But although gazing on with Christian gentleness, the Apostle could not forget the words of Demetrius the silversmith. “Ye know that by this craft we have our wealth . . . so that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought; but also that the temple of the

great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed whom all Asia and the world worshippeth." How strangely mixed is the argument: our craft is in danger, and our religion is being despised. Doubtless many of the rioters were zealous for both. But their zeal for religion was mightily raised by the thought that religion helped their craft. What cries we have heard from those who profess to defend liberty and the public-house—who would rather see a people free than sober. What frenzies of zeal on the part of rich brewers for the poor man's right to his beer! "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." *Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth.* It is not our wish to give pain, and we shall not carry illustrations further. Only even in assemblies of good men who cry, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians," it is not too much to say that Diana is not first in the minds of her devotees. "The craft in danger" is the real thought; and a man easily persuades himself that the universe is in perilous plight if his own trade is threatened. It is but too true that the hint of pecuniary loss will often change a reasonable man into a madman.

It will be wiser not to turn the light too curiously on our opponents, but to ask what we ourselves are seeking in the vehement service of any principle. Is it a victory for right and justice, or a personal and profitable triumph? It is safest to be on the difficult side, to be battling for an interest whose prosperity will bring us no outward gain. But even then we are not secure. Selfishness is always taking fresh and subtle shapes. It may even be found among those prepared to make great ventures and sacrifices for God and goodness. A master of the spiritual life has said, "Men would rather die with Christ in agonies than die to their own honour and be swathed with Him in the cradle." There is no harder thing, even for those who have willingly made lifelong election of great and exacting causes, than to bring them the service of a surrendered heart.

St. Paul could not but perceive that the clamour signed a failing faith. The voices grew hoarse, then they fell silent. And after? The reaction would weaken the whole foundation of idol worship. It would be seen that the mere repetition of the words did not make them surer. It showed that they had been challenged

—seriously challenged. Indeed, whenever any interest musters and clamours in that fashion, it has been first shaken by the thrill of a coming doom. There are fools who, intoxicated by a momentary advantage, persuade themselves that the world is going to turn backward, that men are to pause finally in the march towards the new earth, and forge again the chains snapped for ever. But the wiser among reactionaries are never so much dismayed as when some threatened wrong rises in strong defiance. They feel, with a death-like chill of the heart, that there is an impending upheaval in the affairs of the world.

Of one thing we may be sure: St. Paul was not tempted to cynicism by things which might easily have evoked it in a lower nature. Is it by accident that we read, "After the uproar was ceased, Paul called unto him the disciples and embraced them"? There was hypocrisy in Ephesus as well as vast delusion. There were men whose religion was a shield for their ill-gotten gains. There were others almost hopelessly given over to superstition. These all joined in a miserable, childish, superstitious bawling. There was something in the whole business

that might move one to despair of human nature. St. Paul knew better. He knew that even then and there a deeper life had risen—steadfast to endure. “He called unto him the disciples and embraced them.”

Here it is that blindness has happened in part to Israel to-day. Assuredly the Church is too ready to find heroism only in the past. There is a disposition to question whether there be faith enough on the earth to achieve the great tasks of cleansing and adjustment which lie straight before us. But if there is no human goodness there is no divine love, and we cannot cease to trust men and women without ceasing to trust God. The fault is in those who do not perceive this. They behold far away in time and space souls strong and white—saints with the aureole round their heads. They dream of what never was—and they miss the patient beauty of the way-worn spirits at their side. Must it always be so? Must the present die from us ere it can live? If we drive reverence and love to a distance, we shall miss the inspiration by which the kingdom of God advances. The golden year itself can only come to those who have learned to know it.

“THOU SHALT ANSWER, LORD,
FOR ME”

The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.—ISAIAH liii. 6.

“THE constant and characteristic effort of our Lord’s life,” says Dr. Smith in his work on Isaiah, “was to assert and explain Himself as the Only.” His contemporaries tried to make Him the First among them, but with that He was not satisfied. He pressed on to a singularity beyond, to be realised in suffering. In suffering, men feel their oneness with their kind; through suffering He became like unto men, “but only in order to effect through suffering a timely and a singular service for them.” He did not feel as they did about pain. “Pain never drew from Him either of those two voices of guilt or of doubt. Pain never reminded Christ of His own past and made Him question God.” Nor did He seek pain for any

end in itself. To Him pain was not in itself meritorious, a thing to be gloried in or desired: He shrank from it. "And when He submitted and was in the agony, it was not in the feeling of it, or the impression it made on others, or the manner in which it drew men's hearts to Him, or the seal it set on the truth that He found His end and satisfaction, but in something beyond it. Jesus *looked out of the travail of His soul and was satisfied.*"

Why is the Gospel the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth? Is it because it reveals the eternal purpose of the divine love? Or because it refashions life by an influence exerted on man's heart? Or because it breaks the chain that holds us to our past? St. Paul's answer is: *For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith*—that is, it unrolls the divine righteousness and displays faith as its secret at each disclosure. God set forth Christ Jesus to be an expiatory offering through faith in His blood. This was to declare God's righteousness, that He might be seen by all His creatures as at once jealous for the law and judicially acquitting the guilty.

It is this judicial aspect of the Atonement which the apostles set in the forefront as sovereign and prime. The Cross has many relations, and we are coming to understand some of them better. Others are beyond our knowledge, for to understand the whole we must be able to comprehend all the love and agony of the infinite nature. But the history of the Church shows that there is no fact which believers understand so readily, and rest upon so firmly, as the meritorious Sacrifice. Their teachers may be perplexed, but they are not. Whoever rejects the Stone, it is to them the head of the corner; "it is still the tried Stone, the sure foundation, the Rock whereof Faith speaks, 'Set me upon it, for it is higher than I'; Love's sure abiding Pillar of remembrance, whereon Love's secret is written and graven with a pen of iron for ever." They delight in all statements, however naked and literal, that bring it into clear relief. The preaching of this necessary death, the finished work of Christ, has been indeed the power of God unto salvation from Paul's time to our own. We are writing at present for those who believe in it, who live and die upon no other hope. If we would have

the Gospel bless us wholly, we must receive it wholly. Are we wrong in thinking that among evangelicals, and specially among those who are termed ultra-evangelicals, this aspect of the Cross is much obscured at present, that the temple of life is being framed less fitly because based less firmly on the One Foundation?

The desire to explain the Atonement may go too far. All help is welcome, but the fact itself is much more easily understood than many explanations of it. Its "Onlyness" is the main thing. No analogy goes more than a little way. The Cross far transcends reason and experience. It is indeed inscrutable in its very nature, and must be trusted implicitly if at all. The human mind offers a dull and wearied resistance to explanations which, as it easily perceives, do not touch the central mystery. In the Epistles we have the fact set forth in a variety of phrases which have been found sufficient for the soul's needs. Such explanation as these furnish must be used to the full. For, running to another extreme, evangelical preaching sometimes misses the mark by continual, exhausting demands for faith. The cry

"Believe, believe," mocks and irritates when it is not accompanied by a setting forth of the ground on which faith may rest—how God is just and the justifier of them who believe in Jesus.

The revival of interest in missions is an object on which many Christian hearts are most lawfully set. But let no one fancy that the Church will be lashed into missionary zeal by statistics. Calculations go a very small way in the kingdom of grace, and even if evangelical arithmeticians knew more than they do, hearts are not set on fire by figures. We heard an advocate of this type repeating with infinite contempt some old hymns of meditation and communion. Believers, he said, should not indulge in these luxuries, they should be out in the world preaching Christ. They are ignorant of the first principles of the spiritual life who say so. It is only as the divine thought for man is slowly learned by contemplation of the Atonement that zeal will grow fervent, enduring, bold. It is from the abiding contemplation of His cross that men go forth to preach Christ to the uttermost parts of the earth for which He died.

The characteristic movement of the time towards a higher Christian life claims our deepest sympathy. What can be more noble than the desire to be altogether Christian, altogether loving, altogether hopeful, altogether believing? There is, however, a real danger lest the strain of spiritual life be thrown on moods. This is as completely contrary to the Gospel as reliance upon works. We rest not on coming and going moods, but on something outside of us which remains the same. Amidst the changes of feeling, in times of deadness, even when our hearts are cold and unresponsive, the fact of Christ's death abides valid. *Show Thy servants Thy work*, that they may trust it and it only. The mass of Christians hardly understand anything of the operations of the Holy Ghost in the soul, and as the subject is more deeply studied we may well hope for new developments of Christian life. Christians are not inclined to question experiences which they do not share. They listen to the "music and dancing" with none of the elder brother's anger. The reserve forces of the Gospel are boundless, and Christ is not the end of His own work. But for all there is one ground of trust, a stone "not of this building." The cardinal doctrine of Christianity is deliverance

through a work not our own. Salvation is not by signs, by tokens, by secrets, but by grace alone. Of all life, whether its bloom-time is before or beyond the grave, Christ's death is the necessary root.

"Thou gavest unto me

No sign! I know no loving secret, told
As oft to men beloved, and I must hold
My peace when those would speak of converse high;
Jesus my Master, yet I would be nigh
When those would speak, and in the words rejoice
Of those who listen to the Bridegroom's voice.

"I never heard Thee say,

'Bring forth the robe for this my Son, the best;'
Thou gavest not to me, as unto guest
Approved, a festal mantle rich and gay;
Still singing, ever singing in the cold,
Thou leavest me without Thy door to stay;
Now the Night draweth on, the Day is old,
And Thou hast never said, 'Come in, my friend.'
Yet once, yea twice, methinks Thy love did send
A secret message—'Blessed unto the end
Are they that love and they that still endure.'
Jesus my Saviour, take to Thee Thy poor,
Take home Thy humble friend."

THE CONSECRATION OF JESUS

For their sakes I sanctify myself.—JOHN xvii. 19.

IN his instructive and profound book on the "Religion of the Semites," Dr. Robertson Smith quotes, as containing the deepest conception of the Atonement, these words of our Lord, uttered as He knelt in prayer by the altar of the supreme sacrifice: "For their sakes I consecrate myself, that they also may be consecrated in truth." Besson writes in his spiritual letters, "It is in His passion that the Saviour shows Himself, like the sun at midday, in all the ardour of His love." And in the shadow of the cross, He who had schooled Himself daily to the repression of feeling spoke the secret of His life and death. He interpreted His whole work as a consecration in the power of love. On the cross He consecrated Himself as the atoning sacrifice—the absolute oblation for the sins of

the whole world. Here is the first aspect of the Cross ; its witness to the deep necessity of expiation, to the completeness of Christ's offering for sin. But this doctrine may be stated with a narrow correctness which leaves a world of unknown feeling behind. Before the death of Christ came His life, and that was a long self-sacrifice. It was willingly surrendered hour by hour till all the years were full. Then it was completed—consummated in death. The consecration was for love of His friends, and it meant not merely self-surrender, but also self-purification. As Bishop Lightfoot has said, it implied the sanctification as well as the chivalry of friendship. For a sacrifice on God's altar must be without blemish. "The Divine *Μωμοσκόπος* (I am employing the image of two apostolic fathers) scrutinises the victim with His piercing eye, lays bare the most secret thoughts and intents of the heart, detects the hidden faults which unfit him for a sacrificial victim." So Christ's pastoral care and religious fellowship began and continued till He was laid at last a pure sacrificial offering on the altar of friendship.

The great need of our time is a real consecration, and this must be a consecration after the same manner.

It is true that men are oppressed and haunted by the evils and miseries incident to our present social condition. General Booth's scheme and the reception given to it are proof of this. But do they not prove as clearly that the old spirit of vehement devotion and brotherly love is no longer with us? Men feel for various reasons that something must be done; they do not know what, they are not willing to do much themselves, they are specially unwilling to abandon their present ways of life, and they hope to escape by giving some help to an energetic, clear-voiced man who promises to relieve them of the difficulty. And spokesmen of Churches, when resources of every kind are beyond calculation, advise their brethren to give a little of their gold to this poor outsider, and see whether anything will come of it. Since when were the Churches released from their own responsibility? Surely the time has come for a great and serious effort on their part to enter into more intimate communion with Christ.

The beginning of this must be a return to the Cross. In an address delivered recently by a South London clergyman to a society of his brethren, he says: "The popular doctrine of the Atonement is largely responsible for our difficul-

ties and our slow progress in winning the masses. . . . How man is 'justified by faith without the works of the law' requires a Greek lexicon and a wide array of theological books to discover." One is tempted to retort that if the masses are to be saved by preachers keeping silent on the Atonement and Justification by Faith, their prospects are very hopeful. But let us be just. Is it not true that evangelicalism in many cases has passed into a dull bigotry, which has utterly lost hold of the more generous instincts of the age? Evangelicals have been afraid of that translation of the thought of Christ which every period requires. And so their most precious beliefs have been regarded as hollow and delusive, "known by their always wearing the same formula, as spectres always appear in the same dress." They have timidly and pharisaically shrunk from the urgent social and political problems of their time. Nevertheless, the Cross remains the pattern and the inspiration of love. In meditation and prayer beneath its shadow, and nowhere else, the lost enthusiasm will revive. There men's burden falls from them, there they waken from the dull stupefaction of things temporal. Grey and sombre it may seem at first, but to those who wait there

comes a sudden stream of sunshine, wrapping them in warmth and light.

There men are accepted as a charge from Christ. There we learn to use the fine words of Lacordaire, that "sacrifice is the base and essence of all true society." But it must be the sacrifice of love and purity. In the first instance our duty is to those round us, and among the most favoured children of the world we may find many who, in respect of spiritual care, are as destitute as a man in a lighthouse. A generous friendship may only injure them; it is a consecrated friendship that may save them. A loving parent will not merely save money for his children; he will sanctify himself for their sakes. He will remember that he stands to them as the ideal of goodness and truth, he will realise the awful obligation implied in their pure belief about him, he will remember that he cannot take his own life without taking theirs. What unutterable loss if Christ had even for one moment failed to sanctify Himself! There is an idea of social redemption strictly analogous to the crudest notions of the Atonement—the idea expressed in the notorious formula of "ransom." A selfish millionaire, taking fright either at man or God,

disburthens himself of a considerable part of his means. He hears the wolves in the distance, and throws them what he thinks will occupy them till he is out of the wood. Or he grows old, and trembles at the thought of appearing before the austere Master. He thinks it will be "an experiment worth trying" to give away a huge sum of money. It is a strange and sinister sign of the times that many people have encouraged General Booth who hold him in the utmost contempt, who hate his methods, who class his theology lower than that of Mohammedans and Buddhists, who would not willingly touch him or any of his army with their little finger. They hope that he will make their thrones and throne-lets somewhat firmer. They are willing to give him a trifle if he will master and tame the forces they dread. Well, it is no new thing. History tells us how wealth, in its hour of danger, has enlisted and exalted the priest, has made haste to shuffle on the cloak of hypocrisy. But no man can in any degree contribute to the salvation of society who does not purify himself. The gift is nothing without the giver. Consecration without sanctification is impossible.

It is by this daily surrender that men are led

up gently to the great altars of sacrifice. There is the way of fanaticism, which takes them at once, and if the Christian Church fails to attack the problems of the time in a deeper and more evangelic spirit, we may be near a new outburst of this. "The indifference and levity which we see around us," said Isaac Taylor, in words which have not lost their force, "is the fashion of a day, and a day may see it exchanged for the utmost frenzy of fanatical zeal." The sea in the calm noontide gives little prophecy of the waves at nightfall when the winds are up. The final triumph of the love of God will be reached, we doubt not, through great surrenders. But if these come as the crown of consecrated lives, they will be made with the solemn quietude and anticipation of Jesus.

"My wish and joy stand over
 Until to-morrow; Heaven is glowing
 Through cloudy cover,
 Beyond all clouds loves me my Heavenly Lover."

THINGS WHICH MUST BE SAVED

Strengthen the things which remain.—REV. iii. 2.

FEW thinking persons can be blind to the changes that are taking place in our intellectual conceptions of religion. Some of them are no doubt for the worse; but the slow, solid march of consecrated thought and learning cannot be set aside. It is hopeless to resist the convictions that are penetrating and running through every quarter of the mind. The Spirit of God has not ceased to guide the Church, and we need not accept changes pensively and reluctantly, looking westward as if the glory had departed. Rather, if the substance and soul of the faith remain with us, we turn our eyes to the east and the rising sun, and with invigorated hope take our way thither. Yet all changes must be tested, and our theology has been altered for the worst if the zeal for right-

eousness and the love of the sanctuary are permanently impaired. These are things that must be saved.

If the new theology means a relaxed morality, it is condemned without further argument. If it weakens the imperious and awful law of duty, it cannot be divine. The ardour for purity and justice which burned in the hearts of our fathers must not grow cold. There are grave perils. The scientific theories of the age as popularised by some powerful but atheistic foreign writers are telling. Even at a Church Congress a medical man has declared that heredity and similar facts made blame impossible. He did not add that they made praise and admiration impossible also, though that on his theory is obviously true. Many who do not go this length or near it are subtly touched. They come to acquiesce in evil, to think of it as inevitable. They believe that the world cannot run its course without innumerable transgressions, and that it is vain to fight against things which may change their form, but not their nature. Hence they look cynically at reformers. They sneer at "shrieking fanaticism." They stand apart from the moral battles of the world. They

delight in pointing out the "exaggerations" of enthusiasts, still more in exposing their weaknesses. These latter they take, indeed, as a sufficient condemnation of the crusades led by imperfect and erring men.

Now we believe in the deepest manner that "no man can say Jesus is Lord but by the Holy Ghost." We see not yet all things put under Him. Though the name of Christ rises ever more loudly above the tumult, the day of victory seems far off. But by the Holy Ghost we know that "nothing which ought not to be need be." We look back and see forms of evil dead—it may be dead for ever. Evil itself lives, and may even seem after some triumph of good to close in more pitilessly than before; yet to those who take the large outlook it is clear that progress is being made. To say that the fight is hopeless is to deny the lordship of Christ. We must go on attacking wickedness in every form, and welcoming every reinforcement. There is danger unfathomable and unending in admitting that any wrong is inevitable, that anything is too hard for the Lord.

It is the tragedy of all such public fights that those who lead them have a war in their own

hearts. As Phillips Brooks has put it, "The home country is up in arms while the foreign war is raging, and the man is fighting with himself his own enemy, for himself his own prize." This should make moral reformers very humble. It should purge their passions from earthliness. But it should quicken rather than chill the fire of their zeal. It is true of their critics as well as of themselves, and no man will fight the evil within any better because he has declined the battle outside. It is possible to watch with unflinching selfishness the whole struggle, and hardly an inch of ground would have been gained anywhere but for a few reviled "fanatics." But those who are in it will go on. They know that to leave the side of the oppressed, and the women and the children, would be to renounce their part in Christ.

Orthodoxy itself is by no means free from moral danger. In the eighteenth century, it has been said, religion was something to be proved, not to be acted on. In the preface to "*Clarissa Harlowe*," perhaps the greatest and not the least pure of English fictions, Richardson said: "It will be proper to observe, for the sake of such as may apprehend hurt to the morals of youth

from the more finely written letters, that the gentlemen, though professed libertines as to the female sex, and making it one of their wicked maxims to keep no faith with any of the individual members of it who are thrown into their power, are not, however, either infidels or scoffers." We seem to be past that: and yet it is not certain. Since then our literature shows the awaking of powers that had gone dormant, or had hardly existed in the human mind. But it may be questioned whether the modern sharpening of the spiritual sense and craving has increased as it should have done the honest love of moral beauty. There is a tendency to look away from the life of those whose utterances are pure and inspiring. Among extreme Evangelicals there is something very like Antinomianism—a readiness to cover the sins of orthodox people whose preaching seems to be effectual. And among all classes there is a shrinking from the appropriate punishment of great lapses—a too ready forgiveness and reinstatement of great offenders. There is no teaching more pernicious than that which disparages homely virtue. Plain morals must not go out of fashion. The young must be taught what a great thing it is

to be pure — how blessed it is to live without any festering secret in their past, to have never been in bondage to any degrading habit. They must be taught that this is possible to every one, and that self-restraint will bring innumerable blessings with it, blessings which even the divine pardon cannot restore if they are lost.

We venture also to affirm that, while church-going may not be a test of individual piety, when the general regard for the public worship of God decays religion itself decays.

It is much to be feared that the practice of church-going does not increase. Popular preachers can generally secure audiences. In growing neighbourhoods churches fill almost automatically. But on the other hand there are disagreeable signs. In a church paper it was recently stated that "one sign and cause of weakness just now is the absence of men from church, and even still more from Holy Communion." The writer goes on to say that churches in which within a few years ago a fair proportion of the congregation were men, present a painful contrast now. "In some instances the church is even crowded, because the congregation of females has actually increased.

But the proportion of men is about one in twelve! The proportion of communicants is still worse." There is another point. Do those who go to worship go with the old delight? The Psalms are full of this gladness. How happy our fathers were in their oftentimes plain and humble sanctuaries! Are there not many worshippers who go reluctantly as a matter of duty, but without expecting or receiving any profit?

If the members of a church do not regularly occupy their pews, and if they do not find help in the worship, it is plain that the work of the church must languish in every part. We must be there when we can, even though there is little to attract in the service. It may be true that better preaching would draw larger congregations. It is equally true that larger congregations would lead to better preaching. The pulpit does not occupy its old relation to the intelligence of the country, and perhaps forgets this sometimes—underrates the knowledge of the pew, and thus gives point to the sarcasm that the taste for sermons betokens the extremest form of intellectual destitution. But, after all, people do not go to church mainly to hear clever sermons; they go to seek there the mysterious strength of

the Unseen. The sanctuary should be a place to which men may flee in times of darkness and bewilderment and care ; a place where Christ is ; where God bends over the worshippers, not as a dark Fate, but as a living Father, where the measures of self and of the world are broken down on every side. Wherever men find such a sanctuary they will not forsake it. Still the thirst of the soul is for God, the living God, and they will seek Him where He may be found. Where prayer is offered as if prayer were a power in heaven ; where the Bible is received as divine revelation ; where men are taught to see themselves as guilty and yet beloved ; where perfect love stills all passions and annihilates all mean and base desires—there will never be a lack of worshippers. For men desire with desire the reality of spiritual intercourse, and the teaching where the whole alphabet is Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last.

THEOLOGY AND THE BELIEVER

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.

COL. iii. 16.

A WELL-KNOWN journalist, who often appears in the pulpit, expressed on a recent occasion his astonishment that preachers should waste their time discussing such subjects as Melchizedek. "You have round you," said he, "drunkenness, lust, oppression; Melchizedek may wait till you have got rid of these." In one of his letters James Smetham says—more deeply—"I am at present on the Epistle to the Hebrews. The great difference of such a subject from all others is that all the interests of Time and Eternity are wrapped up in it. The scrutiny of a title deed to £100,000 a year is nothing to it. How should it be? Is there a Christ? Is He the Heir of all things? Was He made flesh? Did He offer the all-perfect sacrifice? Did He supersede the old order of priests? Is He the

Mediator of a new and better Covenant? What are the terms of that Covenant? There are no questions like these. They raise in their investigation the whole soul into the Empyrean. All other interests seem low, trivial, petty, momentary. How needful to search the Scriptures to see if these things *are* so." We are afraid that the sympathies of the moment are with the journalist rather than with the artist. From various camps there come assaults on theology. We have not only to meet the Broad Church position; we are assailed from unexpected quarters with the cry that a thorough theological training disqualifies men from calling sinners to repentance. We propose, therefore, to discuss in succession two questions between which a sharp distinction must be drawn: the relation of theology to the believer, and the relation of theology to the Church. If we get a clear theory, the practical questions are not difficult.

As to the first point, for the individual believer an *articulate* system of theology is not necessary. This has always been recognised by enlightened Christian teachers. In a very interesting little book on Personal Creeds, by Dr. Newman Smyth, that devout and wise theologian properly insists

that on the door of the Lord's house the simple latch of Peter, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," must suffice. The path of faith follows often no formal order of the understanding, but to those rooted in the redemptive order the revelations of God come greeting; and the prey for all devils is the soul that sins against known truth and duty. But Dr. Smyth speaks too much as if he were enunciating a discovery. He will find in the works of the most eminent American defenders of orthodoxy vehement assertions of the same principle. Dr. Charles Hodge, vindicating the claim of the Church of Rome to be part of the Visible Church, says: "It matters not by what name they may be called, whether they follow with us or not; if they bear the image of Christ, those who fail to recognise and honour it, fail to love the brethren; they reject and despise those whom Christ has received, and have reason to consider seriously lest Christ should say unto them, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not unto me." In another letter James Smetham tells of a visit to one of his class members "not likely to recover." She was a cobbler's wife, deaf, poor after a struggling life, and "she has

no words to express her joy, and the sense of having every blessing and abounding." She is afraid to boast, for "she feels herself so sinful, but then, looking to Jesus is *so* easy. She is never lonely night or day." "Here is a soul," he comments, "to whom an abundant entrance is being administered."

It is needless to multiply testimonies. But it is necessary, and perhaps Dr. Smyth would not dissent, to emphasise the word *articulate*. Let it be remembered that the Christian life is a "conscious converse with God in Christ, by the aid of the means of grace." On the one side God utters His Word—the direct personal message of His redeeming love in Christ. The Holy Spirit enlightens the understanding and renews the will, that the Word may have free course. And on its side, the soul continually hearkens, and makes its joyous answer of faith, thanksgiving, and prayer. To quote from Luther, "Neither in heaven nor on earth hath the soul any other thing in which to live pious, free, and Christian, save the holy Gospel—the word of God preached of Christ as He Himself says, I am the Life and the Resurrection, whoso believeth on me liveth for ever." "As the word

is, so the soul becomes thereby ; even as iron becomes red and glowing like fire, by union with the fire." And then, "Not only does faith give so much that the soul becomes like the divine word, full of grace, free and blessed, but it unites the soul to Christ as a bride to her bridegroom." On which Dr. Robertson Smith, to whose profound discussion of the subject we are deeply indebted, comments : "You see, then, how Luther conceives of Christianity : on the one side God pouring out His whole heart, revealing the inmost treasures of His righteousness and love in Christ the Incarnate Word ; on the other side, the believing soul looking straight through all works and all symbols to Christ Himself, and united to Him by faith in the closest personal relation."

But this converse of love on one side, of faith, love, and obedience on the other, need not rest for the believer on a knowledge which he can express in propositions. The little child could not tell how it knew its father's love and its father's wishes. If it were asked to put its true and sufficient knowledge into words, these words would certainly be inaccurate and defective. So believers nourished on the direct communication

of God's Word to their souls, personally appropriating a personal message of love, often cannot put their knowledge into propositions. It is enough if they can put it into practice.

But to grant that a theology is inarticulate is not to deny that it exists. It is simply to affirm what is true of all life—that practice is largely based in every sphere upon propositions which have been taken into the substance of a man's mind, though he would be puzzled and perplexed if he were asked to write them out. The expert angler, for instance, can never communicate his knowledge to others. He may be induced to write a book, but its readers are no wiser, for that which gives him his superiority lies in his mind unformulated. All the same, his success depends on knowledge of and obedience to a thousand laws. Thus the fact that believers who have manifestly grown to a great stature in grace, express themselves with difficulty, and even with inaccuracy, on theological subjects, is no argument for the view that theology is unnecessary, or that between a shallow and a deep theology there is nothing to choose. For they live in direct communion with God in Christ. They deal with the manifestation of God in the

Old Covenant by sign and symbol, and in the New Covenant where it is perfect and freed from type. They may not have the skill to frame or criticise an ordered system of Christian doctrine. But their Christianity—and this is the whole point—rests upon real knowledge, a knowledge which directly touches faith and life, and which is the material for a true theology, even though they themselves cannot so shape it.

Nor is intelligent denial of essential truth consistent with saving faith. The cardinal doctrines of Christianity—the Divinity of Christ, the Atonement, Justification by faith—were not formulated at the beginning. But to worship Christ is to own His Divinity. To say, “We are reconciled to God by the death of His Son,” is to confess His propitiation. To cast the soul on mere mercy is to disavow the righteousness of the law. A really logical and conscious denial of the Deity of Jesus is the negation of Christianity. As Dr. Dale has said, “Wherever faith in the Divine Sonship of Christ declines, there soon decline with it as a rule the joy and exultation that come from the vision of the infinite love of God, and from the consciousness of kinship with Him.”

So far, therefore, as individual believers are concerned, their theology may not, and in the majority of cases will not, be fully articulate. It is there, however, if not in ordered propositions yet in the rich indwelling of the Word of Christ. That is what is to be mainly aimed at, and in this way many humble believers, nourished with the sincere milk of the Word, mighty in the Scriptures, have been unconsciously great theologians, though often so hard pressed that they could only say, in the words over the grave of Heinrich Jung Stilling at Carlsruhe: *Lord, thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee.*

THEOLOGY AND THE CHURCH

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.

COL. iii. 16.

WE have considered the relation of theology to the individual believer, finding that a religion adequate to the ends of practical Christian life need not be founded on formulated and articulated theological propositions, albeit based everywhere on a true Christian knowledge. But whenever we deal with the Church and its organisation new problems emerge. For Christianity is a social thing, and the Christian society for life and power must formulate its knowledge. The individual must grow with the Church, and both must "grow up in all things into Him which is the Head, even Christ; from whom all the body fitly framed and knit together through that which every joint supplieth, according to the working in due measure of each several part, maketh the increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in

love." The growth must be through the understanding and assimilation of revealed truth, and it is only in this way that the Church can attain its perfection. For all Protestants negative the idea of growth by physical means ; or by means partly physical, partly moral. The sacraments even, they exempt at no point from the law of moral action.

Now the Bible contains, and will at last yield to all believers, the normal Christian faith. It is to discover this that the Churches are to pursue the work of theological study ; it is on this account that they are bound thoroughly to instruct accredited Christian teachers ; it is in this way that all distortions, exaggerations, and misconceptions which divide the Catholic Church and hinder the triumph of Christ will at last disappear. The goal is yet distant, and any concession, either to the neglect or contempt of theological study, is to turn back from it and renounce the hope of the New Covenant.

Let us endeavour as clearly as possible to show why.

The worst sectarianism is that which denounces sects. It is based on individualism. The Biblical interpretations and religious experience

of one or two strong characters are made the rule for a community. Men and women of similar type are drawn, and a society is constituted. But it lacks the element of catholicity, and therefore of permanence. Among those who have gravitated towards it fresh individualities develop, and these come into collision with the founders. The result is violent contention and division—each fragment anathematising the other. Our Lord's idea of a universal Christian society is hardly seriously conceived by such sects, and on the Church generally they look with contemptuous hostility, denying to its members as a whole any share in Christ.

Sectarianism, as we have it in its ordinary form, may be a healthy stage in the progress to unity. Each denomination, in addition to the function of testimony for Christian truth generally, has one special portion committed to its care, for the due defence and exposition of which it maintains a separated existence. It is its duty to go on in this manner, exalting the general above the particular, and seeing that its teachers are duly instructed in theology. Then in the fulness of time the reason for its existence will cease (1) by the larger perception of the normal Christian

faith enabling the members to see more exactly the proportional importance of that truth they specially guard, (2) by that truth finding its due expression (not necessarily the expression of the sect) in the creed of the Church catholic. That accomplished, the reason for standing apart disappears, and we have real Christian union, which is union based on faithful study and increased understanding of revelation, and not on the despair of ultimate harmony between Christian minds engaged on Christian truth.

This is a toilsome way, and it can be reached only by the denominations in every possible manner encouraging the study of theology, both in the Scriptures and in the consciousness of the Church. The temptation is to end it by making light of all theology, abandoning doctrine, and professing to substitute love for knowledge.

That is the extreme Broad Church position. But for worship there must be the expression of a common faith, and where there is no worship there is no Church. One section of the Broad Church has accepted this position. It finds worship impossible, and proposes to substitute for the Church of Christ a society for culture—*i.e.*, for fellowship not of a religious kind. Another

section maintains forms of worship to which it attaches no definite meaning. That is, one section of the worshippers mean one thing, another section another, and a third, nothing. The result is something which is partly sentimental enjoyment, partly hypocrisy, but which is not a living, united, and intelligent approach to God in Christ. Hence the weakness of Broad Churchism is that it everywhere scatters the fellowship of the redeemed, and maintains itself either by the eloquence of powerful men, or by entrenching itself in the strongholds of orthodox Churches.

If Christian doctrines were to be viewed as abstract propositions, as articles of creeds, as tests of character, they could not be defended. But they are the food of the soul. The soul is starved in so far as it receives less than Christian truth in its fulness. And the ideal to be laboured for is a knowledge of the Christian faith whereby the message of God—the Gospel—can be set out in its all-sided fulness, and the needs of man can be perfectly expressed to God—or as Dr. Robertson Smith has put it, “the gathering up all aspects of a truly Christian converse with God into a unity of devotional expression in which all believers

can join." For, as the same writer says, "a truth really Christian, when set forth in a devotional shape, will at length draw the sympathy of every child of God." All schemes, therefore, for putting aside any part of the mind of Christ are in the end devices for the starvation of the soul, and the extinction of the Church. The Christian aim is for a unity in which the Gospel promise shall be fully set forth and grasped by faith, and in which all believers can join in common exercises of petition, thanksgiving, and confession.

All experience shows that no minister who is not a theologian can maintain and edify for many years a flock of Christ. The work of the evangelist is to render with vividness to changing audiences certain great facts in Christianity, and first of all—the need of the new birth and the way of salvation. For that, experience—not training—is required. Whoever knows that Jesus Christ has opened his eyes has a message for all the blind, and God forbid that any Christian should ever seek to silence him. This experience and this message belong to the Christian minister as well as to the evangelist; but the minister must also feed the flock, and, unless they are to be satisfied with brief, unhappy,

and abortive pastorates, the Churches must do more, and not less, for theological education. Ministers themselves, if their lives are to be happy and fruitful, must continue faithful, patient, laborious students of divinity—till they go to study where the divinity is clearer—where the light of the face of God is the light of His people.

THE GIFT OF RULE

I will make thee ruler.—MATT. xxv. 21.

THIS is the word of Christ to the good and faithful servants who at last behold His face in righteousness. He does not say, "I will give thee many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." The promise is, "I will make thee ruler," and the joy of our Lord is not in possessing, but in governing.

We may fitly recall this word in view of the increasing potency of the Labour Movement, and the steps it is taking through some of its most trusted leaders towards Christianity. The Methodist Churches (let God be thanked!) have sent out men to lead their fellow-labourers, who not only believe but regularly preach the Gospel. Others, whose position has been less decided, are coming forward with at least a strong affirmation of parts essential to Christianity. To all—to

those furthest as well as nearest—the Christian Church is bound to make an eager and cordial response, and it will. For the present social order is not Christian. It contravenes the fundamental law of justice on which the kingdom of God is built, and which is more to us than mercy itself could be, apart from justice. The truth which now rides so high in the heavens had never such an apostle as Christ himself, and working men are beginning to understand this. They will find Him worth listening to, as He not only stimulates the deep and vital craving for justice, but shows how it may be satisfied.

It must be premised that the New Jerusalem—that is, perfect blessedness—lies beyond death. With many social reformers all that is needed would seem to be a steady, universal *bien-être*, always to be depended and relied upon. But this could only become happiness if the affections were deadened. Christianity quickens them for the very purpose of revealing man's true nature—of delivering him from a base serfdom to the actual and the material. Were it otherwise, his dignity would be ignobly misprized, for the measure of a man is the measure of an angel.

Over against mere possession Christ sets the great idea of rulership. Take leisure, for example. We are in the thick of a righteous movement for shorter hours. But suppose the day is reduced to half an hour, what profit is there if the man is not ruler over his leisure? Multitudes possess leisure; very few of them rule it. The idler wakens to wonder how his day is to be got through, and the answer often comes from beneath. The general dulness and listlessness of men with no occupation has passed into a proverb. Even generous natures often become selfish under this trial. It will be an evil day if working men learn to despise Labour. The great safeguard for nearly all of us is to be found in almost unrelaxed industry. It is pernicious also to despise certain forms of Labour. Utopia itself will need scavengers. But "I will make thee ruler over leisure" is a great promise to be perfectly fulfilled on high, where endless service means endless rest.

Then what shall we say of money? Dante's gaunt, hungry wolf of avarice is still abroad, and does more harm to the Christian Church than any other of its foes. In the United States Christian sentiment on this subject seems to be largely corrupted. In a recent utterance, one

influential preacher declared that it was the duty of some men to be rich. It has not been forgotten how a Christian minister recently boasted of the number of millionaires to be found in the churches of America—where apparently needles have very large eyes. The limit of lawful possession is rulership. If a man is really ruler over his money, he possesses it; otherwise it possesses him. And as it is not an easy thing to master, the most miserable of ambitions is to create a vast fortune. We remember William Smith's picture of the Christian whose whole occupation was really gambling, who came home after a prosperous day thanking God for his gains, and praying to be made more like Christ—the great Spiritualist of eighteen hundred years ago, who would have told him to give all and begin afresh if he would save his soul!

Many illustrations offer themselves, but we shall speak only of knowledge. The thirst to know is a noble passion, and knowledge unruled ends in the people whose names constantly sicken us on magazine covers. They have read everything (except the best) in nearly every language, and written on at least everything they have read. And the end is that they hope for nothing, love

nothing, believe in nothing. Their whole nature has been submerged into selfish indifference, and can be stimulated only, if at all, by the literature of coarse and violent excitement.

What then is to be sought is not possession, but rulership, and that can be gained only by faithfulness over a few things.

"Faithful over a few things." In a sense this describes truly the life which began in the Manger and ended on the Cross. It is still the schooling, and the only schooling, by which men learn to rule their own spirits and all kingdoms whose thrones they climb.

The fulfilment of the promise takes various forms. We are familiar with it in this life. We see men go on from strength to strength, receiving more and more, and remaining unmastered by their possession. But before Christ all earthly life, even the most victorious, is but a passage from a "few things" to a "few things." The distinctions we make here may but pain Him; but "if *that* life is life, this is but a breath."

Inasmuch as no misdoing robs us of all, a man may begin faithfulness at the lowest point of poverty and shame, and be made ruler at last. Our God is the God of Resurrection, and He can

revive men and nations of men from seemingly utter death.

“Is it true—may it be spoken—
That she who has lain so still,
With a wound in her breast
And a flower in her hand
And a gravestone over her head,
While every nation at will
Beside her has dared to stand,
And flout her with pity and scorn,
Saying, ‘She is at rest,
She is fair, she is dead,
And leaving room in her stead
For us who are later born,
‘This is certainly best’?—
Can it be true, be true,
That she lives anew,
That she rises up at the shout of her sons,
At the trumpet of France,
And lives anew?”

Often on earth there may be hardly even an earnest granted; but our citizenship is on high. “There is a spectacle which I have witnessed in the streets of London. In a wooden shed which opens on a level with the damp pavement sits an industrious cobbler. . . . Six days of the week, and in most hours of the day, you may see this man, with his awl and his waxed thread and his lapstone, piercing and hammering the tough shoe-leather. . . . I look again to my cobbler’s stall.

I see lying on the bench beside him—he can snatch a word even as he works—his ‘Pilgrim’s Progress’ or his ‘Serious Call,’ or perhaps some more serious polemic. Our cobbler, too, will flee from the City of Destruction. These carriages with all their paint and gilding, what are they to him? All here is wretchedness and contempt; no face smiles upon him; but he will come soon to the borders of the river Jordan.” Sometimes to the faithful their “few things” are so few that they almost seem to bury and brood over their own hearts in a grave. But it is a grave from which, as the Persian poet says, “a perfume yet shall spring.”

THE BRIGHTNESS OF THE DAY OF CHRIST

At that day.—JOHN xiv. 20.

At that day.—JOHN xvi. 26.

In that day.—JOHN xvi. 23.

SOME thoughts are suggested by the phrase “that day,” used by our Lord to describe the period between Pentecost and the Return. It seemed to the disciples, as He spoke, that it was to be ushered in by a harsh and lowering dawn and a bitter east wind. But He assured them that it was to be a day of growing brightness. We who live in it are often blind to this: ignorant of its work and its reward. The work of this day is, in brief, study and prayer: the result is to be unity and peace.

“In that day ye shall ask me no questions.” He would no more be at their side to solve their problems. But instead of His visible presence

they were to have the illumination of the Holy Ghost. Their life would be lighted by His teaching. This meant advance in privilege. There are better things than external infallibilities and authorities. These are withdrawn. Nor are we left with puzzles that yield to ingenuity, or prizes to be attained by a few giant steps. The wealth of revelation in word and deed is not increased. No new word remains to be spoken; and as we cannot add, it is at our peril if we take away. But the further the mine is worked, the richer is the lode. Under the divine teaching we begin to understand what it is truly to possess the unsearchable riches of Christ. We learn what the real proportions of truth are, as the Spirit takes of the things that are Christ's and glorifies them. *Christ shall give thee light*, is the promise for all that day. As new problems front us the truth discloses its hidden wealth, and every question receives an all-sufficient answer. And ere the day of Christ closes we shall know all that it is possible to disclose to mortals here of the significance and relations of His truth.

The conditions of this schooling are not easy. Our teacher **exacts** patient study, complete

docility, and the earnest effort to bring life up to the level of knowledge. That will be impossible unless we pray, and unless prayer is answered. And so the day is to be a day of prayer fulfilled. "In that day whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name He will give it you. . . . Ask, and ye shall receive." We need not be too anxious to define and limit this promise. The Bible alarms timid commentators by the large and lavish promises it attaches to prayer. But those who go on to prove them do not complain ; and the longer they pray, the more they marvel at the richness of the fulfilment. If the day of Christ is to be marked by the growth of Christian knowledge, it must be a day of prayer. No progress can be made in the discovery of spiritual truth apart from prayer. Prayer is properly and representatively the action of religion. Is it true that the faith and practice of prayer are growing in the Church ? If so, all is well. But if prayer in any of its elements is dying, nothing will make up for its loss. No knowledge of the letter of Scripture, no keenness of speculative thought, no enlarged benevolence will take its place. Prayer is not merely petition, but petition and importunity are of its essence. Prayer is an

exacting and difficult work to nature. It is easy only in full view of the great redemptive sacrifice. Only thus is the death-blow given to fatalism: only thus are men freed from the subtle spells and sorceries, and led out of the bondage of nature. Study and prayer must go on together. Many pray who are content with the teaching they have received, and never seek to enlarge or deepen it. Many study in absolute neglect of the means by which alone Christian knowledge can burst in upon the soul. Both are ignorant that the Holy Spirit teaches now and immediately every loyal, prayerful student in the school of Christ.

Disciples thus loyal and prayerful would be one. We may defend denominationalism as we please—the truth is that ignorance and prayerlessness keep us apart. As believers advance in knowledge of the Son and the Father they will come nearer to unity, and the unity of believers means the conviction of the world. The prayer of the High Priest for all believers in all the day is still lifted: “*That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me.*” This is far

more than a mere moral unity ; it is, as Westcott says, in some mysterious mode which we cannot distinctly apprehend a vital unity. We take Dr. Maclaren's words : " Does anybody believe that the present condition of Christendom, and the relations to one another even of good Christian people in the various churches and communions of our own and other lands, is the sort of thing Jesus Christ meant, or is anything like a fair and adequate representation of the deep, essential unity that knits us all together ? In the early spring, when the wheat is green and young, and scarcely appears above the ground, it comes up in the lines in which it was sown, parted from one another, and distinctly shows their separation and the furrows. But when the full corn in the ear waves on the autumn plain all the lines and separations have disappeared, and there is one unbroken tract of sunny fruitfulness. And so when the life in Christ is low and feeble, His servants may be separated and drawn up in rigid lines of denominations and churches and sects ; but as they grow the lines disappear. If to the churches of England to-day there came a sudden accession of knowledge of Christ and of union with Him, the

first thing that would go would be the wretched barriers that separate us from one another."

To the Church of the future will also come the manifestation beyond question of Christ's supernatural peace. The master powers of the world are, it has been said, discontent and envy. Are these absent from the Church? Are Christians visibly consecrated in truth? One is sometimes tempted to say that Christian men were never more eager in the pursuit of wealth. Givers on a lavish scale seem for the present to have almost disappeared. But as the day of Christ wears on, the world will yet see on the great scale what it has known only partially in single and obscured instances. It will see how Christian men are content with modest and sober conditions. It will see them concerned for their neighbours as much as for themselves, stretching out their hands to the rich friends through the midnight that they may be endowed for giving. It will see them refusing to take advantage of workers put at their mercy. It will see their joy in the midst of outward pain, "like a white blossom in the twilight when purples and reds are hid." And beholding the unity, the beauty, and the peace of the Church, the world

will at last believe that Christ came out from God.

“Day, it has hardly come, it will surely come by and by.” We may feel that its brightness is far off, and that our own life is waning. Be it so. This day of Christ leads on to a brighter day of direct manifestation. We are near a fuller knowledge than will ever be given to the Church Militant. “At present there is a covering upon the face of all people, as there is a covering on the glory of the Lord. He is folded and withheld, and so are we. The body, while conveying and betraying, operates also to hinder and hide. It hangs a curtain between us and ourselves no less than between ourselves and others. We are restrained and concealed behind it. Some day, at the touch of *death*, it will drop from us, and then we shall flow out and be displayed. May it be said of us then, ‘Naked, and not ashamed.’”

THE NOURISHED AND CHERISHED CHURCH

*. . . nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord
the Church—EPH. v. 29.*

NOTHING in St. Paul's conception of the wonderful Church of Christ is more startling than his undoubting faith in the work she was to do, and in the tender, unslumbering love that would for ever guard her. Even now, after some two thousand years of Christian history, we hardly dare to take such assurances in all their splendour. Is the Church the Body of Christ—the Fulness of Him that filleth all in all? Does the Lord indeed nourish and cherish the Church—watch her every moment; lest any hurt her, keep her night and day? To this hour the Church is among us as one that is wounded, and when St. Paul wrote she was outwardly weak, obscure, distracted, untutored. Yet to him she was beautiful as the rose of Christ, though buried

under the snow. He saw her mocked by hostile powers, gagged, bound, condemned at the world's judgment-seat, yet the subject of electing love and redeeming sacrifice, and heir of all things in Christ her head.

The great Gospel is itself the great paradox, and we need not wonder that it is surrounded by companion paradoxes. Few can be more astonishing than these: the apparent abandonment, which is nevertheless a constant tending, of the Church, and the apparent overcoming by world-powers which is nevertheless a victory.

As to the first, let us remember that the saints have never misdoubted Christ and His promises, nor the interest of the Church in these, however they may have misdoubted their own. Alexander Peden is represented by a poet as taking counsel with God whether he should be able to keep true—

“ So I sought the Lord when we met
At the black Moffat Water to get
Just a blink of light on the way,
And to know whether I should play
The man in the dark times yet.

“ But He said, ‘ Content you now,
You shall be where I think best ;’
‘ Yea, Lord,’ I said, ‘ but Thou

Knowest I never did bow
To Baal with the rest,
Nor take the black false test ;'
But He said, ' Content you now.' "

But even Peden, the gloomiest of all the great witnesses, never feared that the Lord would forsake His Church. "There shall be brave days such as the Church of Scotland never saw the like ; but I shall not see them, though you may." "Lord, I die in faith," said another, "that Thou wilt not leave Scotland, but that Thou wilt make the blood of Thy witnesses the seed of Thy Church, and return again and be glorious in Thine own land." Warriston recorded his "sure hope that the Church would be visited and freed." In his last moments James Guthrie, too, foresaw the good of God's chosen, the gladness of His nation, the glory of His inheritance. In the very height of their extremity these men never questioned the present nourishing, cherishing love of Christ to His Church and the glory that was to be. If persecution sifted the Church, it was well, for her great danger had ever been that of becoming a bit of the world under another name. An eminent preacher has said, "I do not myself feel any regret at the departure of monied people. In

some places there is such a dependence on a little oligarchy of wealthy people that there seems no alternative for the Lord of the Churches but to send the rich away." That is pure New Testament doctrine. But persecution does more than send from us those who were not of us. It reveals the Church's heart—as if it spoke through an unguarded sleep. For in the hour of the saint's trial, reserve is broken; and the testimonies are uttered that are to fortify believers through all time. It is as in the article of death:

"When bands remove,
And none are named but names of love."

The Lord of the Church can then speak to His people as He cannot at other times. We have often thought that St. Paul in many places speaks without constraint, without doing violence to the noble modesty of the soul, to the Church as dying—his heart uttering itself wholly to those who rose to meet it and receive it—those for whom nothing remained but the things of the spirit. In such an hour there are disclosures on every hand. The seven thousand who have not bowed the knee come out of the secret places where they nourished their deep hearts. As Oliver Cromwell said in one of his speeches, "Sure I am when the

Lord shall set up the glory of the Gospel Church, it shall be a gathering of people as 'out of deep waters,' 'out of the multitude of waters.'" (To which Carlyle adds: *Ape of the Dead Sea, peering asquint into the Holy of Holies, let us have done with commentaries. Thou canst not fathom it.*) Then their Elijahs cease to bemoan themselves. They behold from the high mountain how the River of God seeks and finds the sea.

For the strength of the Church appears in her persecution as clearly as her faithfulness. When the shock strikes the slumbering land men discover that they have to reckon with a power which the world did not originate and cannot subdue. In the darkest and weariest hour of overthrow and pain the Church has wings folded at her side. They will unfold, and then she is free. The strength of the Church is altogether supernatural, and she is mighty just as she knows it. All the Church's trial is that the word may be fulfilled, "Thou shalt call thy walls Salvation." When she has trusted in alliance with the State, and that is broken, it is helping her to say it. When she has trusted to wealth and influence and they abandon her it is still to the same end. Even when leaders and counsellors fail, it is to teach

her that there is but one Leader—the Prophet like unto Moses. If the Church looks round and says “I have none of these defences, but He is with me,” then she calls her walls Salvation, and her gates Praise.

And then the world knows her, and seeks her for what she is. The world has long since discovered that in the natural there is no redemption. No fibre of its heart is stirred by gospels which cannot promise deliverance from the prison-house of law. When we touch the illimitable world—unknown, and yet well known—when we tear up our calculations, when we forget the circumstances that are so dead against us, when we regard no more the chains that bind the weakening limbs, the hour of release is at hand. The Church of Christ rises girt for her task, and the world perceives that she is not so weak as she seemed to be. No, nor yet so poor.

THE MYSTERY OF THE DIVINE LOVE AND HATE

Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.—ROM. ix. 13.

“Deep called to deep, I trembling stood :
I murmured at eternal fate ;
I said, ‘ *Can* God, for ever blest,
His Jacob love, His Esau hate ? ’ ”

ONE of the most original writers of our time describes the struggle of his mother with this verse. She was a very strong Calvinist, and it was essential for her to have a set, consistent body of opinions which she held unwaveringly. She never hesitated in the presence of external influence or great personal authority ; it was from some doubt or feeling of her own. She had no doubt that Calvinism in its extreme form was to be found in the Bible, yet her son remembers seeing her pause over the wash-tub with a face on fire with feeling, and, wringing the clothes with a

jerk, repeat to herself the lines we have placed at the head of this article. Dean Church, in his very picturesque article on Brittany, says, "Faith, as of old, works in many ways. It is a fearful thing, yet nothing new, that it can co-exist, strong and all-pervading, with monstrous evil; it is compatible with violence and hatred and impurity. Faith is no restraint by itself—is no test of the virtue of the multitude. An age of faith will be fruitful in good; but the evil that grows along with it may rival in horrible excess the most portentous growths of atheism." These are bold words, but nothing is so bold as that Scripture, *Jacob have I loved; and Esau have I hated*. This expresses in the most uncompromising form the truth that God may love a man with fewer natural virtues than the man He hates, and that moral fault does not avert this divine affection. We are prone to think that God's love should be with those who to men are most lovable and to law most dutiful. Yet, if we will think of it, the divine paradox is not mystery, but the highest reason.

For who are dear to earthly parents? The sons that never transgress a commandment and never act without one—who through long loveless

years are ever with them in body and never in spirit—or the sons who are fond, though wayward, who wander, but come back with hot tears and warm embraces? Surely the son to whom his father is only a taskmaster can never be so dear as the son who says and means “father.” Love must be met by love, and no fidelity to any round of duty will make up for the want of it. Love covereth all sins. Transfer this to the sphere of the Divine. God is a person, and loves them that love Him. We live, says Dean Church in the essay we have referred to, where nothing but the present world is assumed and referred to in the forms and language of ordinary intercourse; where society is ever silent about God, and nothing that men do or say in their usual business implies His existence. His name and power and love are never recognised in speech, and is not this because He is not in all men’s thoughts? If they are obedient to moral law it is from custom, from fear, from desire to get on, from want of temptation. But they do not keep the commandments for love of Him who gave them. Now love is the answer to love: what wonder if God loves those whose hearts answer Him through all their sins, and hates those to whom He is

nothing but a name? It is the law of earth as well as the law of heaven: it is the law of righteousness.

But we are asked what is Christianity worth if the Christian is not a better man than the worldling. Inasmuch as the kingdom of God is righteousness, how can they who are unrighteous have a place in it? The soil and climate are judged by the fruit and flower they produce, and if the results of Christianity are beneath those of other systems it must go. All true, but not the whole truth. We do not hesitate to say that many men who are Christians, who bear the marks of predestination and salvation, are morally less admirable than many outside the fold. For a true and divine judgment regards more than the particular stage which a man at a particular moment has reached. It asks the point from which a man started and the goal at which he aims. Now Christianity of all religions is the only one which has a message to the man who has become a beast. It speaks to him and sets before him the loftiest ideal as not too high for his striving. Once the window is opened in the dark soul through which God is seen in Christ, a beginning is made which ends in coronation.

Take this new man in the beginning of his progress and compare him with the man who has an hereditary goodness, whose liability to temptation is small, whose circumstances have always been sunshiny, and you may easily find that a natural man may at a given time be better than a spiritual. But measure their progress—remember that the one holds his perfection but a little moment and that all natural virtues tend to wither, while the other has set his foot on a ladder whose head is in the skies, and that he is succoured by the forces that still proceed from Christ—and you perceive that the comparison is fallacious.

Natural morality is comparatively small in the estimate of Christianity, because it has no power either to efface the blotted and faultful past or to reach the pure and sinless future. Christianity transforms the root of the soul, blots out past transgression, and brings to bear the fostering powers of the world to come in hastening the consummate flower. It never lowers by an inch the perfect standard of goodness, but it never crushes the sinful souls that seek it. It changes the killing and ghastly imperative of the law into a commandment that has life. Its end is the

perfection of the Father in heaven, not a stunted and compromising goodness scarcely distinguishable from prudence.

Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid. The transformation of the root means the complete transformation of the whole, the ultimate eradication of all evil, the appearing without fault before the throne of God. When the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, with all the nations before Him, He will separate them as easily as the shepherd divides the sheep from the goats. The perplexities that torment us here—the inconsistencies not to be reconciled in words which co-exist in actual life—the mysteries of unexplored alloy and mixture in the best and in the worst—will all have vanished, and the deep division of the race be justified. For this the universe waits. The sin of His sons is God's misery—their misery—the world's mockery—it is the burden of the inarticulate groaning of creation. *The earnest expectation of the creature waiteth or the manifestation of the sons of God.*

THE MOVING SOIL

The sower soweth the word.—MARK iv. 14.

LIFE and work are hard even for successful preachers. What was Frederick Robertson's career but a long heartache? And when no outward success is visible it is natural that the old cry should often break forth, "Who hath believed our report?" and the constant dull aching of the spirit say, "I have laboured in vain: I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain."

The preacher is a sower; but in his case the soil moves. This is his trouble: it should also be his comfort.

The generations come and go, but the earth abideth for ever. From the old homestead the sower goes forth to the familiar fields which his fathers tilled, and sows the seed. He comes back to the same place in autumn to reap the harvest

that has never failed him. Who can wonder at the passionate love with which men cling to the soil—the emblem of stability, fruitfulness, faithfulness—dear as the cherished rooftree under which so many have slept and waked ! There are few more touching sights than that of a great, compact congregation receiving the seeds of truth scattered among them. The seed—you see it falling—is good seed ; the hearts that receive it look out of honest eyes ; the harvest will be great. But lo ! the compact mass separates and scatters to the four quarters of heaven, never to come together again. The preacher never has the same soil in which to sow or reap.

Partings make the misery of life. If “the smiling circle small” could only keep together, we should ask no more. If the old friends could remain round a preacher, he would court no man’s pulpit or fame. But how often have we stood by venerable men in little country churches, and heard them tell how here sat father, mother, brave sons and fair daughters, now beyond the sea ; and there the gracious helper and friend of every good word and work ; and in this place the patient, gentle, noble Dorcas. All gone, and none to take their places ! The tide of life flows to the great

cities, the farms are being thrown together, the population is declining, and the years of work that remain must be spent in what is outwardly a decaying and failing cause.

There is no greater test of the richness and strength of a man's nature than this. Fits of gloom and despondency must come, but if they leave no sour sediment behind them the victory is gained. Some escape by virtue of the horrible quality of callousness. Others fall into moral ruin; they become cynical, lazy, indifferent. To overcome there is needed a wise consideration of the laws of spiritual work, and, above all, the blessed, divine gift of faith.

Let it be remembered that the soil moves, and the seed with it. Many can testify to tokens of cheer that gladdened them from far, letters of thankfulness to the village pastor, the village church, and the God of our salvation. The scattering of the soil may issue in a richer harvest. And in the end we shall know what has come of it all, and find that it has not been a failure. The soil will gather itself together again. Estrangement and darkness will vanish. The end of all things is the manifestation of the justice of God.

But specially, the lesson is that the life of

Christ's servants is after all a life of faith—and not of sight. It is a poor ambition to see the work prospering for the sake of the flattery and ease that come of it. But the desire to see the kingdom of God coming, the truth confessed by men—that is not ignoble.

“ You say that the picture is famous.
Well, the thing was a true thing, and so I am glad 'twas
acknowledged.
For the rest, it may go like the toy that we shattered last
even.”

But the best thing is to lean back upon God, and to go on resolutely putting all the forces of life into the essential work, and thinking not so much of results and rewards as of duties. Those, it has been said, are first in reward, who have been first in service: not thinking of reward, hardly ever straightening their backs from toil, and passing as humble a judgment on their work as the last and least of their fellow-labourers upon theirs. Such lives must draw, not from the shallow streams of earth, but from the deep fountains that flow out of the throne.

Nor will they be without gladness and peace. There are, it has been said, two kinds of joy—

the joy that is pursued after, and the joy that overtakes. There is the joy for which the house is swept and garnished, and which so often disappoints or fails to come; and there is the joy that comes to the poor home where we sit at work, too busy to think of it, and brightens the commonplace surroundings and the grey colourless life. The soul that is dutiful always and in all things is not left without such visitants.

As time advances there is a growing brightness for those whose faces are set steadfastly to the East. They think of reward in the large safe way—not of their own present success and recognition, but of their share in the triumph of all the good and the hastening of the kingdom of glory. It is thus that men are nerved to work in the absence of outward success. There is an acquiescence in earthly failure which is shameful. There is a stoicism which need not be coveted. Says the American poet :

“ Me, wherever my life is to be lived. Oh, to be self-balanced
for contingencies.
Oh, to confront night, storms, hunger, ridicule, accidents,
rebuffs as the trees and animals do.”

There is something better—living by the faith

of the Son of God, accepting His appointment, doing His work, drawing from His life, and anticipating His victory. So oftentimes even here we may look down upon and through this earthly life—"transported from the midst of the present into the eternal world, lying at rest among the fulfilled decrees of perfect love, looking back upon the future, as though it were already past, and beholding the fallen Satan."

THE FIRE CHRIST FLUNG ON EARTH

I am come to send fire on the earth.—LUKE xii. 49.

ACCORDING to a word of His own, Christ came from the heavenly sphere to fling fire on earth. In language which from any other lips would have been called reckless, He said this and more—that He sent not peace, but a sword. Into a world where already so many sharp swords were busy, He brought another keener than all the rest, that was to cut asunder the nearest and the dearest. Whatever may be involved in the symbol of fire, this, at least, is clear, it means assault and transformation of the existing state. So in the Christ's thought His religion did not come to crown, with a final glory, a fair temple long in building and needing but that to complete it. A religion welcomed by men as sweetly reasonable, accommodated to their imaginings, disturbing but little the peace of their conditions,

is not Christianity. To Christ the world as it was needed transformation ; out of fervent heat the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, was to rise.

What can be easier than to fling fire ? A child may throw the brand and raise a conflagration that will not cease till the great city lies a mass of charred and blackened ruins. Building is slow and difficult, but one needs no skill to destroy. The young reformer is flushed with brilliant anticipations. He doubts not that his own ardours will spread from heart to heart and change the face of things. Christ was wiser. His were the noblest and most kindling thoughts ; they dropped from the height of the divine nature, but they could not set the world ablaze. Though He came to send fire on earth, and longed to see it burning, He bethought Himself that first He must be baptized with the baptism of death, and was straitened till it was accomplished.

That Christ foresaw and meant His death is the key to the true understanding of His life. When all the agony was over, when He had risen from the grave that could not hold Him, He expounded with the calmness of an immortal's

thought the fitness of His own suffering. But long before it came to pass He knew it and purposed it. Before the time of repulse and check in the very beginning of His career, He looked through and over the fleeting lights and shadows to the cross, and said: "*As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up.*" There is something that touches hard experience in the sight of young and sanguine hopefulness in march for the inevitable overthrow. But our crosses are wrapped in a merciful mist. His stood out sharp and clear before Him even from the first.

Christ knew what we have each to discover, that the world is very hard to set on fire. He underrated neither the greatness nor the difficulty of the work He had to do. But He did not despair. It *was* possible, but possible only in one way. He must die, and so kindle the fire which would never be put out. He knew best, we may be sure. It is not His example that will save men, perfect though it is. We have all of us had examples enough to condemn us, though we had never seen Him. It is not His counsel and wisdom that will redeem a world

that has almost been advised into hell. It is His death that absolves us, renews us, brings us back to God. If for the hour thought retreats from the central theme of Scripture, it must return to what St. Paul deemed the very triumph and crown of the Eternal Reason. If the Church begins to forget the death of Christ, her sinking fires will remind her of her loss. To use the old language of the burnt offering, it is the fire kept burning on the altar that burns day and night and shall never go out.

Every thoughtful mind must mark that the world in our day is making a serious effort to work out its own redemption. We see all round us little fires kindled by those who reject the name of Christ. We are not to despise them. Every true movement of compassion is a spark of the fire He threw. We do not disparage anything done to redress the sorrows and wrongs of life by those who follow not with us. The world needs all its helpers. But this we may say without injustice. Those fires do not last. They burn a little while, and then vanish away. They take no hold of the world. Within the last few years how many of them have burned up fiercely for the moment, and where are they now? Let

East London answer. There is one fire, and one only, that goes on to burn, and that is the fire kindled upon the altar. Other succours come and go: the Church of Christ remains. Other fires die into grey ashes: the fire on the altar may burn low, but it cannot go out.

There is another sense in which this is true of the individual life. The great token and witness of Christ on earth is the life kindled by Him in the beginning and burning on steadily to the end. Perhaps none of us know what such lives have been and are to us; how our faith and hope hang on them. They always burn on the altar of Christ's death, and may we not say on an altar of their own self-sacrifice. The innocent secret kept simply and bravely through the years often comes out at death. It turns out that the life silently and cheerfully embraced, the work pursued with unfailing zest and courage were the last that Nature would have chosen. But they were joyfully accepted as from Christ, and on the altar the fire burned brighter and brighter. In ignoble ease, in self-indulgence, in sloth, all that is godlike dies.

Christ came nearly two thousand years ago to set the world on fire—has He done it? He *has*

kindled a fire ; that cannot be denied. The years are years of the Lord. But will it go out ? Many hope that it will. They do their best to extinguish it. First put it out, some of them are telling us, and you will see what our science and politics will do for you. Many fear it. They give heed to despairing voices at home and abroad and see the fire languishing and dying. But it shall never go out. It is burning and it will spread till the whole world is caught and wrapped in its flames.

THE WEIGHT THAT HANGS ON JESUS

I know whom I have believed.—2 TIM. i. 12.

CAN we trust Christ? Every question of this questioning age is running up into that. If He is God, the everlasting Son of the Father; if He has overcome the sharpness of death; if all power is given to Him in heaven and on earth, then we stand safe. We have not been mocked with cunningly-devised fables. If it is not so, His claims and our hopes fall in a common and irretrievable ruin. If it is so, we may thank the efforts of modern thinkers, who have beaten down old lines of defence, and stand with ourselves face to face with Jesus. He can meet the onset; He can bear the weight; He can turn men's thoughts into vanity. For His work, as the scientists and philosophers clearly perceive, is to break at every point the insufferable fixedness of law.

He, who is God, assures us of God. The demonstrations of the necessary existence of God from metaphysics are now perceived to be mere confusion. The force of the argument from design has been seriously weakened. In any case, arguments yield us nothing of the *character* of Him they more or less dimly suggest. A powerful rhetorician and accomplished thinker has shown us recently the best that can be done by argument ; and if there is nothing but his reasonings between us and death, the grave is at our very feet. No ; the thought of educated Europe is now facing two alternatives—God in Christ, or no God. Deny the Divine Christ, and the possibility of knowing God is destroyed, and atheism is the only ground on which a man can stand. Accept Him, and He tells us plainly of the Father. Accept Him, and the law of evolution has been thwarted. He is no child of Nazareth the disesteemed ; He proceeded forth and came from God. And henceforth, in spite of themselves, the scientists become students and expositors of the glory of His works.

On Him hang the existence and the conquering power of goodness. The supernatural Church on earth, redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, is the

foundation. Its members have been loosed from their sins by His death. But be it remembered that Christ alone frees us from the past. We may seek to bury it : we may say—

“ All that we two only know,
I forgive and I forego ;
So thy face no more I meet
In the field or in the street.”

It pursues us nevertheless : and the longer the world lasts the consequences of sin are more clearly traced, insomuch that Christian preachers of the doctrine of forgiveness often timidly minimise it, and fail to show it as a really supernatural thing. It means not only renewed harmony with God : it means that the consciousness of past sin may be modified and mitigated so as to cease ; that the consequences of sin will not follow us save for further sanctification in this life ; that in the next life they are not found at all, according to the great and forgotten doctrine of Reversibility. In the next world, as in this, grace reigns ; and the places nearest Christ are not given to those who have done or suffered most, but to them for whom they are prepared of the Father. Further, the graces of the renewed life, as Lacordaire reminds us in a beautiful passage, are super-

natural, flowers growing out of Christ's tomb; fruits of a supernatural intercourse with God, established upon the work of sacrifice and substitution, taking us back to that death in which Death itself was overcome. Here, too, we have the one force that does not flinch or quail before the problem of the amelioration of the world. It despairs neither of the West End nor of the East End. It believes that Christ walks through both:

"He goes where out-door wretches walk,
And outcasts under arches creep;
Among them holds His simple talk.
He lets them hear Him in their sleep
They who His name have still denied
He lets them see Him crucified.
While standing on the palace-stone,
He is in workhouse, brothel, jail
He is to play and ball-room gone,
To hear again the beauties rail;
With tender pity to behold
The dead alive in pearls and gold."

Therefore, and because all power is given to Him, we do not despair. Apart from Him, pessimism must become the universal creed. Indeed, among agnostics it is fast becoming so; and it is impossible not to suspect that many of the efforts now made are prompted by a desire to punish the rich as much as by a desire to help

the poor. The alternatives are Christianity and Pessimism. But because Jesus lives and reigns, we look and labour for His victory. What it will be we shall know when the lightnings flash from one end of heaven to the other. Meantime we may thankfully meditate on the vast change that will have passed over all things ere the thirst of His soul is slaked.

Once more, on Jesus hangs all our hope for the future. A great change has come over thought on the subject of the immortality of the soul. There were many, almost within memory, who held fast to that, though they rejected the distinctive doctrines of Christianity. In the life of Reid, the great Scottish philosopher, there is a letter which puts this with striking force. All that is fast disappearing. Now we believe in immortality because we believe in Christ. If Jesus Christ is living, those who died in His love are living too. He lives, He loves, He is coming again. He has swallowed up death for ever. So we lay our dead to rest, and lie down in peace when our own time comes, in the expectation of the coming to this sunlit vale of tears of Jesus Christ with His holy angels, remembering the mighty word which has

comforted so many humble and fearing souls:
"This is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which He hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day."

We might have pursued the theme, and shown that with Jesus is the ethical direction of the world; that He at last will vindicate the dark and high ways of God. But enough has been said to show that if He be what He called Himself, all our hopes are sure. If not, a darkness never to lift has overspread life and thought. May we trust Him, then—fully, unreservedly, joyfully? We may. St. Paul, who knew Him well, committed to Him everything, and was persuaded that He was able to keep it all against that day.

REALITY REDUPLICATES

We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.—I JOHN iii. 2.

“WE would see Jesus.” In the days of His flesh men did see Him, but their eyes were dim, and the veil that covered Him was unrent. Nevertheless there were those who pierced through to the reality, and on whose souls He left some print of His own.

For full vision there needed not the light only, but the vision that could bear it. Once when He gathered His saints to the mountain for anticipation of His sacrifice His glory burst through—“the glory which He had with the Father before the world was.” The light was too keen and bright, and they descended the mountain bewildered, with the Companion to whom men should do whatsoever they listed.

They came nearer Him perhaps after He had risen from the dead in the body He has taken for

ever. Even then the veil was drawn, though drawn thin and fine. The glory was subdued and attempered till it was supportable, and by the sea of Tiberias, while they gazed in silence, the vision sank deep, and none dared ask Him, "Who art Thou?" knowing that it was the Lord. The nearer and clearer the vision, the deeper the mark it leaves, and the triumphs of the Cross after our Lord had risen bear witness to this.

But a day is coming when all believers shall behold their Lord as He is. The naked soul will front the uncreated Light undazzled, unafraid, rejoicing, receiving. "We shall see Him as He is." Then we shall be like Him. The reality will double itself on every side. The likeness already begun will be made perfect and eternal.

Consider how the same law acts in every life. It is reality that doubles itself—makes disciples, wins causes, is served by willing martyrs. Our life is much of it sham, little of it real. Our pretensions to knowledge, to talent, to goodwill towards men, to many other things, are vain enough, but the least among God's elect knows in his bitterest hour of the thin but unbreakable

thread that joins him to Christ. That is the supreme possession. Our imposture, conscious or unconscious, may deceive for the time, but it deceives much less than we think, and it has a brief hour. How many of us flatter ourselves that our falsities are so like the real that men do not see through them. Vainest delusion! We are taken to pieces; our make-up is torn off by rough hands; the tinsel and the theatricalities do not serve us even for some short hours of artificial light. Then? Surely there is something more in us than that. When the most merciless censor has had his will, he must yield to all the redeemed something — something of courage, fidelity, love, aspiration. That is the abiding self, and that influences. Goodness, though in things mainly evil; truth, though in things mainly false, is evermore impressive. Or rather, it is reality that impresses, that reduplicates, whether it be for good or evil.

Take the home. Children are like their parents. Why? Because they see them as they are. Every mask slips off at times, and it is the face behind that the children grow like. If parents are at heart bad, children know it, and grow like them (unless a stronger force prevents).

If the goodness and sweetness of Christ is in father and mother, and suffered to make its own impression, it will be in the child also. In a word, the way to influence men for evil is to be evil; the way to influence men for good is to be good. They will be like you, for they will see you as you are. In the end the real, and nothing but the real, counts.

How wonderful that day will be when we shall see Christ, when we shall truly behold the True! It will come, for "when He shall appear we shall see Him." All things that troubled the clearness of the heart will be over. The eyes will be no more overcast and dark. They will deepen and glow as the first radiance of His face shines over them, and speedily, joyfully, all the nature will pass into the likeness of the unveiled glory of the Lord.

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